திருக்குறள்

KURAL
BY
RAJAJI

14-00

KURAL

THE GREAT BOOK OF

TIRU-VALLUVAR

Selections from Books I & II

With English Translation & Notes by

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MADRAS

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PREFACE

The *Tiru-k-Kural* of Tiru Valluvar is one of the oldest of extant Tamil books. It is generally accepted as belonging to a period anterior to the second century A.D. Some scholars place it in the first century B.C. It is claimed by many that Tiru Valluvar was a Jain. I do not accept this theory. Tiru Valluvar was one of those rare and great men whose catholic spirit rose above all denominations and whose vision was not clouded by dogma or prejudice of any kind. His teachings elude classification on any denominational basis.

Tiru Valluvar's approach to moral doctrine is marked by a very thorough knowledge of human psychology and a desire to help imperfect men with practical hints in the struggle against evil. Throughout we can see how the poet brings everything down to the level of practicality without losing hold of the ideal.

The Second Book of *Kural* consists of seventy chapters dealing with policy in worldly affairs including state-craft, full of interest for the scholar and the historian. The chapters are not addressed only to princes and those around them. They contain principles of conduct that should guide all persons engaged in

secular affairs. About the year 1935 I made selections from the Second Book of *Kural* and published them with translation and notes. My book attracted much more attention than I had hoped for.

The First Book of *Kural* is perhaps the most widely known and the most appreciated work in Tamil literature. It consists of 38 chapters and deals with the duties of man as a householder and as an ascetic. I thought it worthwhile to make selections from that book also and render the verses into English in the same manner as I had dealt with the Second Book and publish both together in one volume, giving to non-Tamil readers a comprehensive idea of this justly famous classic of Tamil literature.

C. RAJAGOPALACHARI.

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FIRST BOOK OF KURAL

DHARMA

Chapter 4

There is no greater wealth one can acquire than *Dharma* and no misfortune greater than the forgetting of it :

அறத்தினூஉங்கு ஆக்கமும் இல்லை அதனை
மறத்தலின் ஊங்குஇல்லை கேடு.

'Forgetting' *Dharma* is failing to perform one's duties according to *Dharma*.

*

Go as far as your strength and resources permit without swerving from the path of *Dharma* :

ஒல்லும் வகையான் அறவினை ஓவாதே
செல்லும்வாய் எல்லாம் செயல்.

This is Tiruvalluvar's characteristic way of bringing everything down to the level of practicality without losing hold of the ideal.

*

Keep the mind free from evil thoughts. This is the whole of *Dharma*. The rest is only of the nature of sound and show :

மனத்துக்கண் மாசிலன் ஆதல் அனைத்துஅறன்
ஆகுல நீர பிற.

The key to purity of action is purity of thought. The attainment of a mind free from evil thoughts is the aim of a religious life, and this is a silent process. External observances are sound and show. ஆகுலம் is sound and show.

அறம் is the Tamil equivalent of the Sanskrit word *dharma*, for which there is no single word equivalent in English. Duty, virtue and other such words do not really cover the full import of either அறம் or *dharma.*

*

True religious life consists in the avoidance of four things: envy, the craving for pleasure, anger and harsh speech:

> *அழுக்காறு அவாவெகுளி இன்னாச்சொல் நான்கும்*
> *இழுக்கா இயன்றது அறம்.*

*

Do not say to yourself, let me see about it later when I shall be better fitted. Live the true religious life now. It will be the one unfailing support while all else will disappear and be of no use:

> *அன்று அறிவாம் என்னாது அறம்செய்க மற்று அது*
> *பொன்றுங்கால் பொன்றாத் துணை.*

*

Only the joy that comes from right conduct is true happiness. Other pleasures are really sources of pain and causes of shame:

அறத்தான் வருவதே இன்பம்மற்ற எல்லாம்
புறத்த புகழும் இல.

Pleasures will soon become pain, if the act that procures it is unrighteous. Right conduct is therefore not only right but wise.

THE GOOD HOUSEHOLDER

Chapter 5

The so-called householder really helps the other orders in the proper fulfilment of their duties :

இல்வாழ்வான் என்பான் இயல்புஉடைய மூவர்க்கும்
நல்லாற்றின் நின்ற துணை.

The unmarried student, he who gives up active life and goes to the jungle and the *sanyasin* can carry on as such only because most others live as good householders. The householders therefore should not be looked upon as selfishly living for pleasures while the others are leading lives of abstinence. The householder works for the others who renounce work.

*

Love and right conduct give to the householder's life its true character and purposefulness :

அன்பும் அறனும் உடைத்தாயின் இல்வாழ்க்கை
பண்பும் பயனும் அது.

Family life is beautiful and purposeful only if it is marked by love and *Dharma*. Love makes it beautiful and *Dharma* is fulfilment of its purpose.

*

If a man goes through the householder's life along the way of *Dharma*, nothing is left for him to attain by becoming a recluse or going to the forest :

அறத்துஆற்றின் இல்வாழ்க்கை ஆற்றின் புறத்து
போஒய்ப் பெறுவது எவன். [*ஆற்றில்*

*

Of all classes of aspirants to *Dharma*, the householder who lives up to the standard is the most esteemable :

இயல்பினான் இல்வாழ்க்கை வாழ்பவன் என்பான்
முயல்வாருள் எல்லாம் தலை.

*

There is more penance in the life of a householder who does what should be done and avoids any lapse from *Dharma*, than in the privations of hermits :

ஆற்றின் ஒழுக்கி அறன்இழுக்கா இல்வாழ்க்கை
நோற்பாரின் நோன்மை உடைத்து.

*

He who leads his life in this world as he should, ranks with the gods in heaven :

வையத்துள் வாழ்வாங்கு வாழ்பவன் வான்உறையும்
தெய்வத்துள் வைக்கப் படும்.

THE LIFE-PARTNER

Chapter 6

She is a true life companion who is equal to the tasks of a householder's life, and who adjusts herself to the bread-winner's resources :

மனைத்தக்க மாண்புஉடையள் ஆகித்தன் கொண்டான்
வளத்தக்காள் வாழ்க்கைத் துணை.

It is essential for happiness in family life that culturally and economically the wife should fall into line with the family of her adoption. The partnership will not work otherwise.

•

There is no true family life where the wife has not the qualities required for fulfilling the duties of a good house-holder. If the mistress of the house has not these qualities, neither wealth nor other circumstance can be of any avail :

மனைமாட்சி இல்லாள்கண் இல்லாயின் வாழ்க்கை
எனை மாட்சித்தாயினும் இல்.

The husband's virtues cannot make up for it.

*

If the mistress of the house possesses the qualities of a true life-partner, nothing will be wanting. If the mistress of the house does not have those qualities, naught will avail :

இல்லதுஎன் இல்லவள் மாண்புஆனால் உள்ளதுஎன்
இல்லவள் மாணாக் கடை.

*

What possession of greater value can one have than a wife, if she be firm in her loyalty to her partner in life ?

பெண்ணின் பெருந்தக்க யாஉள கற்புஎன்னும்
திண்மை உண்டாகப் பெறின்.

கற்பு is not mere physical chastity. It is unqualified loyalty to husband.

*

The true wife thinks not of God when she rises in the morning. She offers her worship to the husband and that is enough. Even the clouds will obey and pour the rain at her command :

தெய்வம் தொழாஅள் கொழுநன் தொழுதுஎழுவாள்
பெய்எனப் பெய்யும் மழை.

The Vedanta as well as Hindu practice have forms of worship which enable the devotee to see the supreme deity in every object of love or adoration. Husband-worship is not a neglect of God.

*

Of what use is that purity which is brought about by physical restrictions placed on women ? Their own conscience is the best watch :

சிறைகாக்கும் காப்புஎவன் செய்யும் மகளிர்
நிறைகாக்கும் காப்பே தலை.

CHILDREN

Chapter 7

Of all things that one may be blessed with, I can think of nothing equal to the joy of having begot children who have grown up to true enlightenment :

பெறும்அவற்றுள் யாம்அறிவது இல்லை அறிவுஅறிந்த
மக்கள்பேறு அல்ல பிற.

*

Sweeter far than heavenly ambrosia is the porridge in which one's child has dabbled with its little hand :

அமிழ்தினும் ஆற்ற இனிதேதம் மக்கள்
சிறுகை அளாவிய கூழ்.

*

They speak of the sweet tones of the flute and of the harp who have not had children and heard them lisp their newly learnt words :

குழல்இனிது யாழ்இனிது என்பதம் மக்கள்
மழலைச்சொல் கேளா தவர்.

*

The best inheritance that a father can provide for his son is an education that will fit him to take an honoured place among cultured men :

தந்தை மகற்கு ஆற்றும் நன்றி அவையத்து
முந்தி இருப்பச் செயல்.

In bringing up sons, fathers should remember that not wealth but education conduces most to their happiness.

*

Hearing words of appreciation uttered by people about her son, the mother feels greater joy than what she felt on the day he was born :

ஈன்ற பொழுதின் பெரிதுஉவக்கும் தன்மகனை
சான்றோன் எனக்கேட்ட தாய்.

*

The son's greatest filial service is so to conduct himself as to make men say in wonderment, "Great must have been the father's good deeds to be blessed with such a noble son":

மகன் தந்தைக்கு ஆற்றும் உதவி இவன் தந்தை
என்நோற்றான் கொல்எனும் சொல்.

AFFECTION

Chapter 8

Those who have not a loving disposition, belong wholly to themselves. The tender-hearted belong to others even in their bones:

> அன்பிலார் எல்லாம் தமக்குஉரியர் அன்புடையார்
> என்பும் உரியர் பிறர்க்கு.

Love makes them a possession of the living world outside of them.

*

The enlightened hold that the saving joy of the soul when burdened with the body is the experience of human affection:

> அன்போடு இயைந்த வழக்குஎன்ப ஆர்உயிர்க்கு
> என்போடு இயைந்த தொடர்பு.

i.e., Human affection is possible only if the soul is clothed in flesh and blood, and it is worth while for the sake of the experience of such affection to suffer the miseries of life on earth.

The soul would like to be born in flesh and blood for the sake of enjoying this incident of life on earth.

*

Affection is a training for *bhakti*, and out of *bhakti* will come unsought, true enlightenment, the goal of all endeavour.

* அன்புஈனும் ஆர்வம் உடைமை அதுஈனும்
நன்புஎன்னும் நாடாச் சிறப்பு.

*

Strewn with pleasure is the way to Heaven for it can be attained by well-ordered family life:

அன்புஉற்று அமர்ந்த வழக்குஎன்ப வையகத்து
இன்புற்றார் எய்தும் சிறப்பு.

This is contrasted by implication to the toilsome path of celibacy and penance.

*

Men of imperfect understanding think that a tender heart helps one only in the path of religion. Love inspires the war-like deeds of the brave soldier too:

அறத்திற்கே அன்புசார்பு என்ப அறியார்
மறத்திற்கும் அஃதே துணை.

It is well known that the bravest warrior is often the most tender-hearted. Parimelazhagar's interpretation of this Kural is different. மறம் in his commentary is the contrary of அறம் and he explains the verse to mean that

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* *I have amended the text as a result of comparing this Kural with Bhutattalwar's Andaadi, 1st stanza.* நன்பு *therein is used to denote* Jnaana. *The interpretation given by Kural commentators retaining the old text* நண்பு *is far too flat to be correct. c.f.* சிறப்பு *in the verse next below and in Kural 4–1.*

love overcomes wrath and enmity, and helps one not only to do the right himself, but also to overcome the wrong done by others. மறம் has in Tamil literature also another meaning besides the one Parimelazhagar has taken up. மறம் stands for the virtues of the soldier (see Kural, ch. 39-4.), and I think that is the sense in which the word is used in this verse, and it makes the use of the word திணை appropriate.

*

Inflexible law withers up the soul of him that has no love in his heart even as the sun shrivels up the bodies of boneless worms:

என்பு இலதனை வெயில்போலக் காயுமே
அன்பு இலதனை அறம்.

As the spine supports the bodies of vertebrates, love supports the soul. Without it, life shrinks and stops the spirit's evolution.

*

Where there is no tenderness of heart, life is barren of purpose. Can a tree that is dried up in the desert sun hope to put forth leaves?

அன்புஅகத்து இல்லா உயிர்வாழ்க்கை வன்பாற்கண்
வற்றல் மரம்தளிர்த் தற்று.

*

Without a tender heart, of what avail are the externals of family life? Just as the outer

ear or eye may be there, but it is of no avail to the deaf and the blind, so is the soulless routine of a householder's life purposeless without tenderness of heart :

> *புறத்துஉறுப்பு எல்லாம் எவன்செய்யும் யாக்கை*
> *அகத்துஉறுப்பு அன்பில வர்க்கு.*

*

Without tenderness of heart, the body is but bones covered up with leather. In love alone is the secret of life :

> *அன்பின் வழியது உயிர்நிலை அஃதுஇலார்க்கு*
> *என்புதோல் போர்த்த உடம்பு.*

Life functions really in love and not in the physical activities of the body.

———

AN OPEN HOUSE

Chapter 9

The only justification for remaining in family life and for acquiring and keeping property is that one may command the means by which help may be given to those who seek help:

> இருந்துஓம்பி இல்வாழ்வது எல்லாம் விருந்துஓம்பி
> வேளாண்மை செய்தல் பொருட்டு.

Family life is not a right but a duty arising out of the obligations of the individual to society.

*

To sit for a meal by oneself keeping out those who come expecting hospitality is a thing to be abhorred even if the food were the elixir of immortality :

> விருந்து புறத்ததாத் தான்உண்டல் சாவா
> மருந்துஎனினும் வேண்டற்பாற்று அன்று.

*

The Goddess of Prosperity will be gladdened in heart and linger in the house of the man whose smiling face welcomes those who seek hospitality:

> அகன்அமர்ந்து செய்யாள் உறையும் முகம்அமர்ந்து
> நல்விருந்து ஓம்புவான் இல்.

*

Must he indeed sow seed in his field, who eats what remains after feeding the guests?

வித்தும் இடல்வேண்டும் கொல்லோ விருந்துஓம்பி
மிச்சில் மிசைவான் புலம்.

The gods will look after the man who feeds his guest before sitting down himself to eat. Hospitality is itself seed enough for his fields and the crops will rise.

*

"What have we gained spending all our lives in toil and care? Nothing avails now." Thus on their last day will lament those who have failed to look after those who come for help and earn the fruits of such sacrifice:

பரிந்துஓம்பிப் பற்றுஅற்றேம் என்பர் விருந்துஓம்பி
வேள்வி தலைப்படா தார்.

Hospitality is a sacrificial offering.

*

How stupid those misers are who fail to practise the law of hospitality and succeed in being poor in the midst of plenty!

உடைமையுள் இன்மை விருந்துஓம்பல் ஓம்பா
மடமை மடவார்கண் உண்டு.

*

The delicate flower withers away if you take it to the nose to inhale its fragrance. But the

guest who comes for a meal will shrink even at a distant look that indicates unwillingness to receive :

> மோப்பக் குழையும் அனிச்சம் முகம்திரிந்து
> நோக்கக் குழையும் விருந்து.

We should treat guests more delicately than the most delicate flower.

THE SOFT WORD

Chapter 10

The speech of enlightened men will consist of truth soaked in affection :

இன்சொலால் ஈரம் அளைஇப் படிறுஇலவாம்
செம்பொருள் கண்டார்வாய்ச் சொல்.

Gentleness of speech is not pleasant falsehood, but the truth that is spoken by men who know the whole of the law and are not misled by dry dogmas, who are full of affection for the person to whom the truth is addressed and therefore find the words that save truth from harshness.

*

The kindly word and the glad and loving look accompanying a gift are appreciated even more than the gift itself :

அகன்அமர்ந்து ஈதலின் நன்றே முகன்அமர்ந்து
இன்சொல னாகப் பெறின்.

To give is good. But the sweet manner accompanying the gift touches the heart of the receiver, even more than the gift.

*

The relief of distress consists in the glad face, the welcome look and speech that is marked

by genuine consideration for the feelings of the man that is in distress :

> முகத்தான் அமர்ந்துஇனிது நோக்கி அகத்தானாம்
> இன் சொலினதே அறம்.

The gift that is thrown at the distressed without these accompaniments does not really relieve suffering but hurts.

*

Poverty has no fears for the man who has gladdened the hearts of men by kind words :

> துன்புஉறூஉம் துவ்வாமை இல்லாகும் யார்மாட்டும்
> இன்புஉறூஉம் இன்சொ லவர்க்கு.

The world will not leave such a man to suffer by reason of adversity.

*

Not jewels but courteous deportment and gentleness of speech are the things that adorn :

> பணிவு உடையன் இன்சொலனாதல் ஒருவற்கு
> அணிஅல்ல மற்றும் பிற.

*

Truly it is strange that people speak harsh words, when they have themselves felt and experienced the joy that kindly speech begets :

> இன்சொல் இனிதுஈன்றல் காண்பான் எவன்கொலோ
> வன்சொல் வழங்கு வது.

Every moment we have direct personal experience of the marvellous effect of kind words from others and yet, when we speak, we forget it and indulge in harsh speech.

The Valluvar technique of carrying conviction can be seen in this.

*

When gentle words are available, why do men choose the word that hurts? Is it not foolish to pick unripe berries when ripe ones can be had for the plucking ?

இனிய உளவாக இன்னாத கூறல்
கனி இருப்பக காய்கவர்ந் தற்று.

GRATITUDE

Chapter 11

The good deed that is done not in return but in the first instance is more precious than anything in this world or beyond. Nothing can repay that act :

> செய்யாமல் செய்த உதவிக்கு வையகமும்
> வானகமும் ஆற்றல் அரிது.

What is done in return for something previously done can never be as great as the deed born out of sheer generosity, be it ever so small by itself. There is therefore nothing that can be considered an adequate repayment.

*

By itself the help rendered may be a trifle, but the hour of need when it was given makes it bigger than the whole world :

> காலத்தினால் செய்த நன்றி சிறிது எனினும்
> ஞாலத்தின் மாணப் பெரிது.

*

If it is a good deed, never forget it. But if some one does a wrong, it is good that very day to forget it :

> நன்றி மறப்பது நன்று அன்று நன்றல்லது
> அன்றே மறப்பது நன்று.

*

Painful like death itself may be the evil that you suffer at a man's hand. But remind yourself of some good thing that he once did for you. It may help you to forget the present pain :

> கொன்றுஅன்ன இன்னா செயினும் அவர்செய்த
> ஒன்றுநன்று உள்ளக் கெடும்.

This is yet another instance of Tiruvalluvar's characteristic way of giving helpful practical hints to achieve what may seem to be a mere counsel of perfection, showing what a great master of psychology he was.

RECTITUDE

Chapter 12

The acquisitions of a man of rectitude go down to his children without diminution and will protect them against adversity :

> செப்பம் உடையவன் ஆக்கம் சிதைவு இன்றி
> எச்சத்திற்கு ஏமாப்பு உடைத்து.

Rectitude of means employed gives stability to what is acquired, whereas what is got by swerving from the straight path stands ever in danger of being lost again or to serve as a snare. The most powerful motive for the householder is the desire to see that his children are assured of happiness after him. Upright conduct, says Tiruvalluvar, ensures this. It is not a mere superstition invoked for supporting the moral rule. There is practical wisdom in the statement as to the stability of well-earned wealth and the instability of acquisitions got by methods that society condemns.

*

It may seem that no evil attaches to the acquisition that comes by swerving from the path of rectitude. But do not be tempted. Give up the thought at once :

> நன்றே தரினும் நடுவு இகந்து ஆம் ஆக்கத்தை
> அன்றே ஒழிய விடல்.

*

Who lived a life of rectitude and who did not can be seen from how the children they have left behind fare :

> தக்கார் தகவிலர் என்பது அவரவர்
> எச்சத்தால் காணப் படும்.

Your life will impress itself on your child's character, and if you wish well for your child beware and walk in the path of rectitude, says the poet.

Parimelazhagar construes the verse to mean that good men will be blessed with progeny and that bad men will be denied that joy. அவரவர் எச்சத்தால் can more easily mean what has been said above and this interpretation is more in consonance with Tiruvalluvar's rational ethics.

*

If your thoughts show signs of turning from the path of rectitude, know that misfortune awaits you :

> கெடுவல்யான் என்பது அறிகதன் நெஞ்சம்
> நடுவொரீஇ அல்ல செயின்.

The swerving of your mind can be noticed by you before anyone else sees it. Look upon it as an evil portent and beware.

*

If the man who walks firmly in the path of rectitude thereby loses his wordly possessions,

his poverty does not lower him in the estimation of the world. He retains his status in society as if nothing had happened to him :

> *கெடுவாக வையாது உலகம் நடுவாக*
> *நன்றிக்கண் தங்கியான் தாழ்வு.*

*

Let businessmen know that it is good business to protect the interests of others exactly as they do their own :

> *வாணிகம் செய்வார்க்கு வாணிகம் பேணி*
> *பிறவுந் தமபோல் செயின்.*

This is the Kural version of the formula that honesty is the best policy. Rectitude is not only *dharma* but worldly wisdom also.

SELF-CONTROL

Chapter 13

Self-control is as necessary a virtue for the householder as for the recluse. The duty of guarding against cupidity, pride or anger is what is dealt with in this chapter.

Self-control takes one to the gods. Want of it will push one into utter darkness :

அடக்கம் அமரருள் உய்க்கும் அடங்காமை
ஆர்இருள் உய்த்து விடும்.

*

There is no possession more precious than self-control. Watch therefore as you would watch treasure :

காக்க பொருளா அடக்கத்தை ஆக்கம்
அதனினூஉங்கு இல்லை உயிர்க்கு.

*

It is well for every one to be meek, but for those who have wealth meekness is added possession :

எல்லார்க்கும் நன்றாம் பணிதல் அவருள்ளும்
செல்வர்க்கே செல்வந் தகைத்து.

Learning, good birth, and wealth are not reduced but enhanced by a becoming humility of deportment.

*

If in a single birth a man lives a life of self-control and withdraws the five senses as a tortoise when it senses danger draws its head and legs into its shell, he shall have insured himself against evil in seven births thereafter :

ஒருமையுள் ஆமைபோல் ஐந்து அடக்கல் ஆற்றின்
எழுமையும் ஏமாப்பு உடைத்து.

*

You may neglect everything else, but be ever vigilant in restraining your tongue. Those who fail in this meet with great trouble :

யாகாவா ராயினும் நாகாக்க காவாக்கால்
சோகாப்பர் சொல்இழுக்குப் பட்டு.

Not that in other things one may relax control ; but the danger of careless or angry speech is constantly present, and requires special attention.

*

The injury caused by a burn heals, but the pain caused by the thoughtless word is never forgotten. It remains for ever in the mind like an ugly scar :

தீயினால் சுட்டபுண் உள்ஆறும் ஆறாதே
நாவினால் சுட்ட வடு.

Men forget many injustices but they rarely forget or forgive an insult.

*

If a man knows how to control the rising anger in his mind and guards himself against losing his temper, all other virtues will seek him out and wait on his pleasure :

கதம்காத்துக் கற்றுஅடங்கல் ஆற்றுவான் செல்வி
அறம்பார்க்கும் ஆற்றின் நுழைந்து.

Let a householder guard against careless speech and loss of temper. The rest will be easy.

THE WELL-REGULATED LIFE

Chapter 14

Discipline of life is more precious than life itself, for it is out of that discipline that life derives value :

ஒழுக்கம் விழுப்பம் தரலான் ஒழுக்கம்
உயிரினும் ஓம்பப் படும்.

*

One may study many philosophies and clear doubts but it is the well-regulated life that ultimately avails and nothing else. Therefore guard it whatever may be the difficulty involved:

பரிந்துஓம்பிக் காக்க ஒழுக்கம் தெரிந்துஓம்பி
தேரினும் அஃதே துணை.

This is also the warning of the Upanishads. [Khatopanishad, ii, 24]

*

The well-regulated life ennobles every rank of life. Where this fails, good or noble parentage will not save the man :

ஒழுக்க முடைமை குடிமை இழுக்கம்
இழிந்த பிறப்பாய் விடும்.

*

The Brahmin can read again what he has forgotten of the scriptures and make up for lost memory. But if he neglects regulation of life he forfeits for ever the advantage of his birth :

மறப்பினும் ஒத்துக் கொளலாகும் பார்ப்பான்
பிறப்புஒழுக்கம் குன்றக் கெடும்.

What is lost in learning may be made up for, but what is once lost in the way of life is lost for ever. The caste system regulated society in the days of our poet. The Brahmin had the duty of study and teaching. If the scripture was forgotten by the Brahmin, he lost the purpose of his elevated rank. But this, says the poet, could be made up for by fresh study. Not so, however, could the Brahmin regain his position once he fell into the error of neglecting the regulation of life prescribed for him. Ignorance or the neglecting of prescribed studies was a great offence in the Brahmin. But a greater offence was the neglect of the discipline of life prescribed for him.

*

A well-regulated life brings honour. Neglect of it will lead to utter disgrace :

ஒழுக்கத்தின் எய்துவர் மேன்மை இழுக்கத்தின்
எய்துவர் எய்தாப் பழி.

*

The learned really betray ignorance when in spite of their learning they fail to regulate their

lives in accordance with the principle of social co-operation :

> உலகத்தோடு ஒட்ட ஒழுகல் பலகற்றும்
> கல்லார் அறிவிலா தார்.

Much learning is worthless if one cannot exercise self-control in conduct and behaviour. Regulation of life and social co-operation are more important than scriptural or philosophical knowledge.

AGAINST UNLAWFUL LOVE

Chapter 15

It is stupidity to entertain amorous thoughts about one who belongs to another. Any one that knows either the way of *dharma* or that of worldly wisdom will avoid this folly:

பிறன்பொருளாள் பெட்டுஒழுகும் பேதைமை ஞாலத்து
அறம்பொருள் கண்டார்கண் இல்.

*

Among those who stray from the path of right conduct, there is none so stupid as the man who trespasses into another man's home:

அறன்கடை நின்றாருள் எல்லாம் பிறன்கடை
நின்றாரின் பேதையார் இல்.

This is so because he will find no pleasure such as he foolishly hopes for in the contemplated offence but, instead, as a result must live in constant fear of disgrace and punishment.

*

It is better for one to be dead than to be tempted by thoughts of sin where one has been received with trust:

விளிந்தாரின் வேறுஅல்லர் மன்ற தெளிந்தார்இல்
தீமை புரிந்து ஒழுகுவார்.

*

Of no avail will be a man's importance, however great it may be, if he is thoughtless and lacks the simple wisdom of not violating another's home :

எனைத்துணையர் ஆயினும் என்னாம் தினைத்துணையும்
தேரான் பிறன்இல் புகல்.

Disgrace will be his lot notwithstanding all his importance.

*

It may seem all too easy to err with another's wife, but the disgrace will be unredeemable for all time :

எளிதுஎன இல்இறப்பான் எய்தும் எஞ்ஞான்றும்
விளியாது நிற்கும் பழி.

The infatuated fool may think it is all so easy and imagine that it will end with it. But the disgrace will be as permanent as the pleasure was momentary, and escape from consequences will be as impossible as the error was easy.

*

Enmity, Sin, Fear, and Disgrace will ever dog the path of the man who violates the sacredness of another's home :

பகைபாவம் அச்சம் பழிஎன நான்கும்
இகவாவாம் இல்இறப்பான் கண்.

Those who have personal experience of the crime deprecated in this chapter can appreciate

all that is stated herein and the insight of the poet.

*

He is not a true householder who lets his amorous thoughts dwell on those who belong to others. He may in conduct be a good husband and a good father and everything else, but the impure thought is enough to make it all a sham :

அறன் இயலான் இல்வாழ்வான் என்பான் பிறன் இயலாள்
பெண்மை நயவா தவன்.

*

Manhood consists in being able to control one's mind and being proof against amorous thoughts towards one that belongs to another. It is good religion as well as social order :

பிறன்மனை நோக்காத பேராண்மை சான்றோர்க்கு
அரன் ஒன்றோ ஆன்ற ஒழுக்கு.

Virility does not consist in feebleness of self-control and indulgence in illegitimate desire.

FORBEARANCE

Chapter 16

Does not the earth support the man that is engaged in digging it ? It is proper that we too bear with those who wrong us :

அகழ்வாரைத் தாங்கும் நிலம்போலத் தம்மை
இகழ்வாரைப் பொறுத்தல் தலை.

*

If one wrongs you, put up with it. But it is better still to forget it if you can :

பொறுத்தல் இறப்பினை என்றும் அதனை
மறுத்தல் அதனினும் நன்று.

*

It is not a very great achievement if one revenges a wrong done. It is a golden achievement and will remain in the world's memory as such if a strong man shows forbearance in the face of wrongs done to him :

ஒறுத்தாரை ஒன்றாக வையாரே வைப்பர்
பொறுத்தாரைப் பொன்போல் பொதிந்து.

*

Retaliation gives but a day's joy. Forbearance brings glory for all time :

ஒறுத்தார்க்கு ஒருநாளை இன்பம் பொறுத்தார்க்குப்
பொன்றும் துணையும் புகழ்.

Momentary is the gratification felt in returning pain for pain. But the reward for forbearance is the esteem of good men for all time. We may not therefore sacrifice the larger for the smaller pleasure.

*

Pride leads a man to do wrong to you. But your greater pride should be to defeat him by your forbearance :

மிகுதியான் மிக்கவை செய்தாரை தாம்தம்
தகுதியான் வென்று விடல்.

Your forbearance will prove your greater worth and disillusion his pride. Forbearance is not a negative thing. It is an effective blow delivered to the wrong-doer's pride. This is the defeat referred to. It is not a platitude. The incisive rationalist approach is a common characteristic of Tiruvalluvar and Marcus Aurelius.

*

The man that shows forbearance in the face of insult has truly practised the discipline of the *sanyasin* though he is a householder :

துறந்தாரின் தூய்மை உடையர் இறந்தார்வாய்
இன்னாச்சொல் நோற்கிற் பவர்.

*

Ascetics go without food and do penance, but forbearance in the face of the foolish attacks

of ignorant men is a greater penance than such fasting :

உண்ணாது நோற்பார் பெரியார் பிறர்சொல்லும்
இன்னாச்சொல் நோற்பாரிற் பின்.

DO NOT ENVY

Chapter 17

There is no greater wealth than the possession of a mind that is free from envy :

> *விழுப்பேற்றின் அஃதுஒப்பது இல்லையார் மாட்டும்*
> *அழுக்காற்றின் அன்மை பெறின்.*

The envying of others' possessions is equivalent to poverty. It makes one, though in possession of wealth, go through as much misery as poverty causes. The misery cannot be remedied by any acquisition of wealth or other sources of joy, as the cause of pain arises from outside oneself, *viz*., in another's wealth. Hence to be endowed with a temperament free from envy is the greatest blessing on earth.

*

It is he that cares not for his own spiritual or mental well-being that allows his mind to entertain envious thoughts instead of feeling happy when he sees the well-being of others :

> *அறன் ஆக்கம் வேண்டாதான் என்பான் பிறன் ஆக்கம்*
> *பேணாது அழுக்கறுப் பான்.*

*

Envy makes a man lose happiness without having a single enemy in the outer world. His own envy is enough to do all the mischief :

அழுக்காறு உடையார்க்கு அதுசாலும் ஒன்னார்
வழுக்கியும் கேடு ஈன்பது.

Your own mind can be your worst enemy. Envy makes poverty amidst wealth and misery amidst causes for joy. No thief is required to rob you of your wealth. Envy does the work by making your wealth of no avail to you for joy.

*

The Goddess of Good Luck is impatient with men that cannot bear the sight of other people's good fortune. She immediately entrusts such men to the charge of her elder sister :

அவ்வித்து அழுக்காறு உடையானைச் செய்யவள்
தவ்வையைக் காட்டி விடும்.

In the folk-mythology of India which curiously embodies Vedanta, the elder sister of the Goddess of Fortune is Misfortune. Misfortune is the responsibility of the senior goddess, while the younger is in charge of good luck and well-being. The two are sisters, and therein is the philosophy of Vedanta which looks on pain and pleasure with indifference.

*

You may be blessed with every good trait and all good fortune. But the one blemish of envy is enough to cast you into hell-fire.

அழுக்காறு எனஒரு பாவி திருச்செற்றுத்
தீயுழி உய்த்து விடும்.

Envy makes hell for the man now as well as hereafter.

*

None has grown richer by envying. No one has lost anything by not envying:

அழுக்கற்று அகன்றாரும் இல்லை அஃதுஇல்லார்
பெருக்கத்தின் தீர்ந்தாரும் இல்.

Simple truth, but we forget it when we see another's good fortune! Alas, says the poet, that so many men purposelessly entertain envious thoughts which only cause pain to themselves without achieving anything!

DO NOT COVET

Chapter 18

அழுக்காறு is envy, an inability to be happy at the sight of another's well-being. வெஃகல், greed, is covetousness, the desire to obtain by illegitimate means what is another's.

*

If a man's mind turns to thoughts of abandoning rectitude and to take by illegitimate means what belongs to others, it will automatically lead him from error to error and bring disgrace to him and his family:

> நடுவுஇன்றி நன்பொருள் வெஃகின் குடிபொன்றிக்
> குற்றமும் ஆங்கே தரும்.

*

Thou who desire to be happy in the real sense, do not turn to what is not legitimate, which at the most can give but transient pleasure:

> சிற்றின்பம் வெஃகி அறனல்ல செய்யாரே
> மற்றுஇன்பம் வேண்டு பவர்.

*

What then is a man to do? Control your mind, says Tiruvalluvar, whenever the wandering senses seek to drag it downwards.

Those who have learnt to see aright by keeping their senses under restraint never think of others' possessions to make up for their want:

இலம்என்று வெஃகுதல் செய்யார் புலம்வென்ற
புன்மையில் காட்சி யவர்.

*

Of no avail is keenness of intellect, of no avail is wide knowledge if greed seizes a man and leads him to folly :

அஃகி அகன்ற அறிவுஎன்னும் யார்மாட்டும்
வெஃகி வெறிய செயின்.

Greed is a malady which affects even men of keen intellect and wide learning. Hence this warning.

*

If indeed you live a householder's life in order ultimately to learn to look upon all beings with the eye of universal love and charity, how ruinous to that plan it is to let greedy thoughts enter your mind !

அருள்வெஃகி ஆற்றின்கண் நின்றான் பொருள்வெஃகிப்
பொல்லாத சூழக் கெடும்.

*

Do not covet others' possessions. When you come to possess the things which you laboured illegitimately to obtain, you will find no true enjoyment therein such as you had desired. True

enjoyment is possible only if the acquisition is lawful :

> *வேண்டற்க வெஃகிஆம் ஆக்கம் விளைவயின்*
> *மாண்டற்கு அரிதாம் பயன்.*

*

Greed is folly. It results only in misery equivalent to death. On the other hand, it should be your pride not to be tempted to look with covetous eyes on other people's possessions. Cultivate this indifference. It will give you a sense of triumph :

> *இறல் ஈனும் எண்ணாது வெஃகின் விறல்ஈனும்*
> *வேண்டாமை என்னும் செருக்கு.*

Greed defeats its own purpose. Contentment leads to victory of the spirit.

SPEAK NOT ILL OF OTHERS

Chapter 19

You may sometimes speak the harshest things to a man's face, but do not indulge in the folly of attacking any one behind his back :

கண்நின்று கண்அறச் சொல்லினும் சொல்லற்க
முன்இன்று பின்நோக்காச் சொல்.

*

If men will see their own faults as they see others', verily, evil would come to an end in this world :

ஏதிலார் குற்றம்போல் தம்குற்றம் காண்கிற்பின்
தீதுஉண்டோ மன்னும் உயிர்க்கு

Tiruvalluvar felt just like Burns!

———

AVOID WORTHLESS TALK

Chapter 20

This chapter is intended to instil decorum of speech in company and points out the serious consequences of a seemingly venial fault.

*

He who indulges in purposeless talk causes disgust to his company and finally earns universal contempt :

பல்லார் முனியப் பயன்இல சொல்லுவான்
எல்லாரும் எள்ளப் படும்.

*

Indulging in worthless talk in mixed company does greater mischief than even wrongs done to friends :

பயன்இல பல்லார்முன் சொல்லல் நயன்இல
நட்டார்கண் செய்தலின் தீது.

You may hope for charity from friends whom you wrong, but you will earn the contempt of society by lack of restraint in general conversation.

CONSCIENCE

Chapter 21

தீவினையச்சம் is trepidation at the thought of wrong-doing.

The folly that brings about wrong-doing frightens good men, although bad men see nothing terrible in it:

> *தீவினையார் அஞ்சார் விழுமியார் அஞ்சுவர்*
> *தீவினை என்னும் செருக்கு.*

Bad men have got over natural hesitation by use and wont. The fear of evil as first experienced is something precious that should be kept undiminished.

*

From evil springs fresh evil, like fire which regenerates itself. Men should shrink from sin as from a terror even worse than fire:

> *தீயவை தீய பயத்தலால் தீயவை*
> *தீயினும் அஞ்சப் படும்.*

The peculiarity of fire is that, of what it consumes it makes for itself regenerative continuity. That which is set fire to and is being destroyed causes fresh material to burn. Sin has this quality of fire and in a more terrible form.

Therefore shrink from it at the very start, for later you will be unable to cope with it.

*

The highest and most precious of all arts consists in not returning evil for evil:

> அறிவினுள் எல்லாம் தலைஎன்ப தீய
> செறுவார்க்கும் செய்யா விடல்.

Forbearance is recommended as the highest form of all higher knowledge. It stops the chain of evil where you can control it. You cannot prevent another but you can prevent yourself from contributing to the progressive sequence of evil.

*

Even by inadvertance do not think of any act that will hurt another. If you plan evil for any one, the law of Nature decrees your own ruin:

> மறந்தும் பிறன்கேடு சூழற்க சூழின்
> அறம்சூழும் சூழ்ந்தவன் கேடு.

*

It is possible to escape other enemies, but you cannot fly from the relentless pursuit of your own evil deed:

> எனைப்பகை உற்றாரும் உய்வர் வினைப்பகை
> வீயாது பின்சென்று அடும்.

*

The evil pursues the evil-doer as the shadow pursues a man wherever his feet may take him. Those who commit evil cannot escape nemesis:

தீயவை செய்தார் கெடுதல் நிழல்தன்னை
வீயாது அடிஉறைந் தற்று.

*

Do you love yourself? Then do not do to any one what falls in the class of wrong-doing, however small it may be:

தன்னைத்தான் காதலன் ஆயின் எனைத்துஒன்றும்
துன்னற்க தீவினைப் பால்.

SOCIAL CO-OPERATION

Chapter 22

ஒப்புரவு is active social co-operation and the spirit of helpfulness behind it.

What good did the creatures of the earth do to the clouds that pour the rain? So indeed should you serve society, seeking no return:

கைம்மாறு வேண்டா கடப்பாடு மாரிமாட்டு
என்ஆற்றுங் கொல்லோ உலகு.

*

Good men put forth industry and produce wealth not for themselves, but for the use of society:

தாளாற்றித் தந்த பொருளெல்லாம் தக்கார்க்கு
வேளாண்மை செய்தல் பொருட்டு.

Wealth is not to be earned for the purpose of self-indulgence or for satisfaction of greed. Wealth should be treated as the citizen's instrument for helpfulness. The word வேளாண்மை is not just helpfulness, but helpfulness combined with a sense of duty.

*

There is no pleasure in this or in the other world equal to the joy of being helpful to those

around you. Do not lose the opportunity for this rare pleasure:

புத்தேள் உலகத்தும் ஈண்டும் பெறல்அரிதே
ஒப்புரவின் நல்ல பிற.

*

Man is born as a social being. He alone lives who functions as a social co-operator. He who does not recognise this duty is to be counted as one dead :

ஒத்தது அறிவான் உயிர்வாழ்வான் மற்றையான்
செத்தாருள் வைக்கப் படும்.

*

When prosperity comes to a man who has understanding and knows his duty to his fellow-men, it is like the village tank that is filled by the rain :

ஊருணி நீர்நிறைந் தற்றே உலகு அவாம்
பேர்அறி வாளன் திரு.

It is, that is to say, an occasion for joy for the whole community. The tank keeps the water from running to waste or being dried up, and serves to quench the people's thirst throughout the year.

*

When wealth comes to a large-hearted man, it is like the village tree coming to be in fruit :

> பயன்மரம் உள்ளூர்ப் பழுத்தற்று செல்வம்
> நயனுடை யான்கண் படின்.

The joy of finding ripe fruit in their own village tree is an apt figure for the prosperity that comes to the large-hearted citizen to whom it is joy to spread joy around him for which prosperity brings him the opportunity.

*

If wealth comes to one who is blessed with a large heart, it becomes the unfailing drug plant for society's troubles :

> மருந்துஆகித் தப்பா மரத்தற்றுஆல் செல்வம்
> பெருந்தகை யான்கண் படின்.

The village tank stores the water from running to waste ; so the wise citizen acquires and looks after his acquisitions in order to serve all. The village tree bears ripe fruit ; so the liberal-minded citizen freely gives of his wealth to help all around. The medicinal tree is the precious alchemist of nature. Its leaves, bark, fruit and root take out of the earth those essences which relieve ailments of all kinds. So does the wealth of the great citizen serve to relieve suffering of all kinds. His knowledge and experience make up the alchemy that is needed

to put the wealth to effective use for the benefit of the community.

*

Poverty does not stop the social co-operation of those who have a clear understanding of the duties of life. They continue their social service undeterred by adversity :

இடன் இல் பருவத்தும் ஒப்புரவிற்கு ஒல்கார்
கடன் அறிகாட்சி யவர்.

It is not necessary to be rich to be helpful. There are ways in which in any position one can help. The essence of social service is in the mind. Under each changed circumstance, a new duty arises and the due fulfilment of it is what should be attended to. When, therefore, a man loses his material resources, he does not need to think that his capacity for social co-operation has ceased.

*

The worst misery that poverty brings to the large-hearted man is the pain of not having resources enough to serve others in the manner he had been accustomed to :

நயன்உடையான் நல்கூர்ந்தான் ஆதல் செயும்நீர்
செய்யாது அமைகலா ஆறு.

*

If social co-operation appears to ruin you, it is indeed worth while to be ruined. You may sell yourself out into slavery if that would enable you to serve the people around you :

> ஒப்புரவினால்வரும் கேடுஎனின் அஃதுஒருவன்
> விற்றுக்கோள் தக்கது உடைத்து.

There is no price too high to pay for service to society.

HELPING THE POOR

Chapter 23

That alone is a gift which is given to the needy. Gifts to others are in the nature of a business transaction wherein what is given is expected to be duly returned :

வறியார்க்கு ஒன்று ஈவதே ஈகைமற்று எல்லாம்
குறியெதிர்ப்பை நீரது உடைத்து.

குறியெதிர்ப்பை denotes the record of presents received from relations on certain occasions in accordance with customary social duty. Such presents are recorded to be compensated for by equivalent gifts on a similar future occasion when the donor receives gifts.

•

Receiving charity, even when poverty permits it, invariably hurts. On the other hand, to give to the poor is good, even if there were no future world wherein merit is duly rewarded :

நல்லாறு எனினும் கொளல்தீது மேல்உலகம்
இல்எனினும் ஈதலே நன்று.

The very act of giving gives joy to the giver and receiving a favour causes pain to the receiver. This is inherent in human nature,

apart from any consequences as promised in Scripture. This is a characteristic instance of the Tiruvalluvar approach. He always reserves for emphasis an aspect that is not bound up with religious beliefs.

*

You may find it unpleasant to be approached for charity. But that is only until you see the radiant face of the man whose distress you have relieved :

இன்னாது இரக்கப் படுதல் இரந்தவர்
இன்முகம் காணும் அளவு.

When you see that face, you will feel that it was indeed a good fortune that you had the chance and the power to create so much joy, miserable human being as you were with so many limitations.

*

The ascetic's strength of mind enables him to bear hunger and out of it arises his power also. But the act of relieving another's hunger is greater than suffering hunger oneself :

ஆற்றுவார் ஆற்றல் பசிஆற்றல் அப்பசியை
மாற்றுவார் ஆற்றலின் பின்.

The suffering of privations is brave but it is braver to feel for others and stint yourself to help them.

*

Fortunate is he who saves men from the devastating curse of hunger, for he has thereby deposited his possessions in a well-guarded vault:

அற்றார் அழிபசி தீர்த்தல் அஃதுஒருவன்
பெற்றான் பொருள்வைப் புழி.

*

Have not these men ever experienced the delight of giving? Else, why are they so hard-hearted and refuse to give and at the end of it all disappear from earth leaving behind what they withheld from the needy?

ஈத்துஉவக்கும் இன்பம் அறியார்கொல் தாம்உடைமை
வைத்துஇழக்கும் வன்க ணவர்.

They would not be so foolish and miserly if they had the imagination to realise what great joy they had in their power to make for themselves which they vainly try to find otherwise. If they tried it once, they would see it.

*

Wretched is he whose poverty forces him to beg for alms. But more wretched indeed is he

whose narrow heart makes him close the door against the hungry so that he may eat by himself:

> இரத்தலின் இன்னாது மன்ற நிரப்பிய
> தாமே தமியர் உணல்.

*

Death is most painful. But even that becomes pleasant to the good man when he finds himself unable to help the wretched:

> சாதலின் இன்னாதது இல்லை இனிது அதூஉம்
> ஈதல் இயையாக் கடை.

The extolling of alms-giving and the unmeasured condemnation of the miser might appear foolish in the age of industrial revolution and may not be appreciated when reconstruction of the economic structure of society on an entirely new basis is actively canvassed. We should try to understand it in the background of a social organisation which in those days was not even remotely conceived as possible of alteration by law. All that was said in those days about charity should be recast and applied to social service in the new order. The substance remains though the form may change.

PUBLIC ESTEEM

Chapter 24

Poverty is wealth if it is brought about for causes that raise a man in the esteem of the world. Death under certain circumstances is life ever-lasting. Such poverty which is not poverty and such death which is not death but life, come only to those who understand true values :

நத்தம்போல் கேடும் உளது ஆகும் சாக்காடும்
வித்தகர்க்கு அல்லால் அரிது.

*

When men have not lived so as to earn the esteem of good men, why do they not see and grieve over their own fault but blame the world that refuses to esteem them ?

புகழ்பட வாழாதார் தம்நோவார் தம்மை
இகழ்வாரை நோவது எவன்.

According to commentators, chapters 25 to 38 deal with matters of special significance to the order of ascetics and monastic life. When Kural was written, large numbers of people of the Jain and Buddhist denominations were solemnly pledged to it. Some believe that Tiruvalluvar was a Jain. But even if he was not a Jain, he wrote for all, including Jains. There was therefore a place for special chapters dealing with the monastic life in the comprehensive book that Kural was planned to be. But one cannot be certain that all these chapters had this specific purpose. Much of what is said in these chapters is applicable even to men leading family lives. Tiruvalluvar definitely takes the view that detachment in conduct is the essence of the principle of renunciation and that monastic life is not necessary for a man's salvation if he knows how to do his duties in ordinary life with detachment and equanimity.

COMPASSION

Chapter 25

Diverse are the teachings of the religions of the world, but in all will be found that compassion is that which gives men spiritual deliverance. Hold on to it :

நல்லாற்ருன் நாடி அருள்ஆள்க பல்லாற்ருல்
தேரினும் அஃதே துணை.

*

அருள் is love for all creatures equal to what is associated with blood relationship.

*

Soul-endangering sin flees from him who looks upon all beings with affection :

மன்உயிர் ஓம்பி அருள்ஆள்வாற்கு இல்என்ப
தன்உயிர் அஞ்சும் வினை.

*

Even as the happiness of this world depends wholly on material possessions, compassion is that on which your happiness in the world beyond wholly depends :

அருள்இல்லார்க்கு அவ்வுலகம் இல்லை பொருள்
இவ்வுலகம் இல்லாகி யாங்கு. [இல்லார்க்கு

The rhyme in அருள் and பொருள் helps the emphasis in this and the next verse.

*

Those who have lost their possessions may flourish once again. But there is no hope for those who have failed in the duty of compassion :

பொருள்அற்றார் பூப்பர் ஒருகால் அருள்அற்றார்
அற்றார்மற்று ஆதல் அரிது.

Wealth can be lost and got again, but goodness lost is an irrecoverable loss.

*

Can one who has no compassion in his heart practise *Dharma* through other virtues? This is no more possible than that one who has no understanding can teach the true meaning of things:

தெருளாதான் மெய்ப்பொருள் கண்டற்றுஆல் தேரின்
அருளாதான் செய்யும் அறம்.

Men can see easily that clarity of understanding is essential for acquiring knowledge, but they do not see what is equally true, *viz.*, that compassion is essential for goodness.

*

When a man is inclined to be cruel to those over whom he has power, let him think of himself trembling before the cruelty of stronger men:

வலியார்முன் தன்னை நினைக்கதான் தன்னின்
மெலியார்மேல் செல்லும் இடத்து.

We cannot make men see the pain they cause to others except by making them remember their own suffering at the hands of others.

EAT NO MEAT

Chapter 26

How can a man adopt the way of compassion, gorging on the flesh of other beings in order to fatten his own flesh ?

> தன்ஊன் பெருக்கற்குத் தான்பிறிது ஊன்
> எங்ஙனம் ஆளும் அருள். [உண்பான்

Meat eating is inconsistent with tenderness to life or compassion. Nature cannot work a contrary whatever be the casuistry about it. If we must eat meat, let us not talk of compassion or charity.

*

The butcher with the knife in his hand cannot turn his heart to compassion. It is just the same with one who has trained his mind to find pleasure in the eating of the body of another creature made tasty with condiments :

> படைகொண்டார் நெஞ்சம்போல் நன்றுஊக்காது
> உடல்சுவை உண்டார் மனம். [ஒன்றன்

He who likes the taste of meat is a butcher whose occupation one detests. It is no use distinguishing between meat-eating and the slaughtering of animals oneself.

*

Eating the meat that is obtained by killing is gross stupidity. It is the direct opposite of the doctrine of compassion to kill the doctrine of non-killing by eating meat and encouraging killing :

> அருள் அல்லது யாதெனில் கொல்லாமை கோறல்
> பொருள் அல்லது அவ்வூன் தினல்.

To make other people break the law against killing life cannot be consistent with compassion. There is no sense therefore in those who would not themselves kill eating the meat that is necessarily obtained by killing. This is obviously a protest against the eating of meat practised by persons professing to be adherents of the law of non-killing, and an answer to those who argue that dietary rules should not be mixed up with compassion or virtues of the mind.

*

If men will decide not to kill for the sake of eating, no one will make a trade or profession of slaughtering living creatures :

> தினற்பொருட்டால் கொல்லாது உலகுஎனின் யாரும்
> விலைப்பொருட்டால் ஊன்தருவார் இல்.

This is an answer to the argument that people live by selling meat and that if we buy meat already slaughtered, there can be no sin in it or want of compassion.

*

What is meat but a cruel and ugly ulcer or wound in the body of another creature? How can one who realises this make it an article of food?

உண்ணாமை வேண்டும் புலாஅல் பிறிதொன்றன்
புண்அது உணர்வார்ப் பெறின்.

It is strange, says the poet, that something so disgusting and so cruel can be regarded as food.

*

More meritorious than a thousand burnt offerings is to give up the practice of killing a living creature and eating its carcase:

அவிசொரிந்து ஆயிரம் வேட்டலின் ஒன்றன்
உயிர்செகுத்து உண்ணாமை நன்று.

*

All the living creatures of the world offer worship with folded hands to the man who refrains from killing and abstains from meat:

கொல்லான் புலாலை மறுத்தானை கைகூப்பி
எல்லா உயிரும் தொழும்.

The poet figures to himself the grateful adoration of dumb animals as to a God descended on earth to save them from their relentless enemies.

NON-KILLING

Chapter 33

Share your food with the hungry and help life in all forms. Refrain from causing death to any form of life. All the codes enjoin this :

பகுத்துஉண்டு பல்லுயிர் ஓம்புதல் நூலோர்
தொகுத்தவற்றுள் எல்லாம் தலை.

*

Life is dear, but even to save your life, do not do that which will deprive another creature of its own dear life :

தன்னுயிர் நீப்பினும் செய்யற்க தான்பிறிது
இன்னுயிர் நீக்கும் வினை.

PENANCE

Chapter 27

Penance consists in the fortitude with which the pain that falls to one's lot is borne and in the avoidance of causing pain to sensient beings. This is the substance of penance, nothing else :

உற்றநோய் நோன்றல் உயிர்க்குஉறுகண் செய்யாமை
அற்றே தவத்திற்கு உரு.

All false notions of supernatural benefits arising out of self-inflicted pain are discounted herein quietly and a rational and catholic doctrine of patient suffering is indicated.

*

Blessed is he who is qualified for penance. To those who undertake it without being truly qualified, penance is mere profitless travail :

தவமும் தவமுடையார்க்கு ஆகும் அவம்அதனை
அஃதுஇலார் மேற்கொள் வது.

*

Those who have not renounced the worldly life must have perhaps kept out of the order of ascetics only to be able to look after those who undergo privations for penance's sake :

துறந்தார்க்குத் துப்புரவு வேண்டி மறந்தார்கொல்
மற்றை யவர்கள் தவம்.

So obviously good is renunciation that this perhaps must be the reason for so many refraining from adopting that life. There is a delicately expressed warning here that the householder's life is not to be deemed inferior.

*

The gold in the furnace shines the more it is in the fire. So do they who suffer in order to chasten their spirit shine the more resplendently for the pain that they willingly bear :

சுடச்சுடரும் பொன்போல் ஒளிவிடும் துன்பம்
சுடச்சுட நோற்கிற் பவர்க்கு.

*

He who has acquired mastery over his self is the object of universal worship :

தன்உயிர் தான்அறப் பெற்றானை ஏனைய
மன்னுயிர் எல்லாம் தொழும்.

தன் உயிர் தான் அறப் பெற்றானை : He who holds his life in fee-simple, i.e., who does not let himself be held by his senses. Otherwise, instead of the spirit being master and the body its slave, the soul becomes slave to the body.

———

IMPURE LIFE

When Kural was written, the monastic life was common in South India.

Chapter 28

If one has falsehood in his heart and secretly breaks the law of celibacy the five elements that watch from inside his body laugh at the futile fraud :

> வஞ்ச மனத்தான் படிற்றொழுக்கம் பூதங்கள்
> ஐந்தும் அகத்தே நகும்.

Remember that you have within you five witnesses watching your secret and shameful crime. Not God the All-immanent, but even the physical elements laugh in scorn, says the poet.

*

Of what avail are the trappings of purity or sainthood when within him his conscience knows its inescapable guilt ?

> வானுயர் தோற்றம் எவன்செய்யும் தன்னெஞ்சம்
> தான்அறி குற்றப் படின்.

*

The feeble-minded wearing the brave trappings of strength is like a miserable cow putting on the skin of a tiger to save itself from being

impounded while feeding stealthily on the corn in a stranger's field :

> வலி இல் நிலைமையான் வல்லுருவம் பெற்றம்
> புலியின்தோலை போர்த்துமேய்ந் தற்று.

Men think this saint has conquered the flesh and will not stoop to offences of the flesh and thereby he gets the opportunity for secret crime.

*

If a man hides himself in the externals of a saint and under that cover commits sin, he descends to the life of the mean bird-catcher who hides in the bush to trap innocent birds :

> தவம்மறைந்து அல்லவை செய்தல் புதல்மறைந்து
> வேட்டுவன் புள்சிமிழ்த் தற்று.

*

Making public pretensions to purity of life, if you secretly act contrary to the law, soon will you be landed in numberless troubles and you will lament in exceeding measure :

> பற்றுஅற்றேம் என்பார் படிற்றொழுக்கம் எற்று
> ஏதம் பலவும் தரும். [எற்றுஎன்று

Consider well, Is it worth while? asks Tiruvalluvar in his characteristic way.

*

There are some in this world who like the *Kunri* seed are beautifully red all over, but have in their hearts a black spot like that seed.

புறம்குன்றி கண்டுஅனைய ரேனும் அகம்குன்றி
மூக்கின் கரியார் உடைத்து.

குன்றி is a very hard and light and beautifully red seed used as the smallest unit in weighing gold. It has a black spot on its "nose".

*

There are many that pass for holy men who keep foulness in their hearts and go through the external ablutions of saints in order to hide their sins :

மனத்தது மாசுஆக மாண்டார்நீர் ஆடி
மறைந்துஒழுகும் மாந்தர் பலர்.

*

Is not the cruel arrow smooth and straight, while the curved lyre makes sweet music? Our judgment must depend not on appearance but on conduct :

கணைகொடிது யாழ்கோடு செவ்விதுஆங்கு அன்ன
வினைபடு பாலால் கொளல்.

*

Avoid what the world condemns. If you succeed in this, there is no need for the shaven head or the growing of long beards :

மழித்தலும் நீட்டலும் வேண்டா உலகம்
பழித்தது ஒழித்து விடின்.

Some hermits shave their heads clean and others allow their hair to grow wild, according to the order to which they belong. Purity makes the saint, not the external.

TRUTHFULNESS

Chapter 30

Truthfulness is attained if one's speech is such that it wrongs no being in the world :

> வாய்மை எனப்படுவது யாதுஎனின் யாதொன்றும்
> தீமை இலாத சொலல்.

Truth is not truth if it is spoken to further some wrong. The standard test for right conduct including truthfulness is harmlessness. This does not mean that truth is underrated.

*

If one could speak an untruth which brings good without the least blemish of evil, it might be classed with truth :

> பொய்ம்மையும் வாய்மை யிடத்த புரைதீர்ந்த
> நன்மை பயக்கும் எனின்.

This is perhaps possible in cases like that of a doctor who says something hopeful for the patient which he knows is not accurate but which he believes may possibly do him good and which hurts no one. புரைதீர்ந்த நன்மை = Good without any concealed defect or blemish. Apart from this and similar cases of exception to the doctrine of verbal truth, the poet probably intends in

these two verses to base the law of truth-speaking on the foundation of non-violence.

To some, the causing of pain to others is the great wrong and everything should be adjudged good or bad on this basic test ; to others, truth is an absolute duty and a breach of that duty is by itself wrong and need not be related to the causing of pain to others. It is perhaps easier to speak the truth than to avoid the causing of harm to others. The latter is therefore a test which leads to a severer trial than literal accuracy. Those who explain the duty of truth on the basis of avoidance of pain to others are however not to be understood to allow laxity.

The following verse will remove any doubt.

*

Of all things confirmed in our experience, the rule of truthfulness stands out most firmly established. There is nothing more precious than truth :

*யாம்மெய்யாக் கண்டவற்றுள் இல்லை எனைத்தொன்றும்
வாய்மையின் நல்ல பிற.*

*

If you are truthful in thought and word you are superior to one who undergoes penances and gives gifts :

மனத்தோடு வாய்மை மொழியின் தவத்தோடு
தானம் செய்வாரின் தலை.

*

Truthfulness earns the esteem of the world besides bringing in its train the merit of every other virtue without the physical privations of penance :

பொய்யாமை அன்ன புகழ் இல்லை எய்யாமை
எல்லா அறமும் தரும்.

*

Water makes external cleanliness. Truthfulness is the detergent of the heart :

புறம்தூய்மை நீரான் அமையும் அகந்தூய்மை
வாய்மையால் காணப் படும்.

*

Lamps do not give the light that holy men desire. It is the light of truth that illuminates their path :

எல்லா விளக்கும் விளக்கல்ல சான்றோர்க்கு
பொய்யா விளக்கே விளக்கு.

———

AGAINST ANGER

Chapter 31

He truly is angerless who avoids anger when the wrong-doer is under his power. Where his anger cannot hurt, what matters it whether he guards against anger or not ?

செல்இடத்துக் காப்பான் சினம்காப்பான் அல்இடத்து
காக்கின்என் காவாக்கால் என்.

*

Everyone knows that it is bad for oneself to lose temper in dealing with superiors. But where anger is directed against persons in one's power it is the worst of all offences :

சொல்லா இடத்து சினம்தீது செல்இடத்து
இல்அதனின் தீய பிற.

Anger causes pain and a fresh lease of life is given to ill-will. Where it does not hurt the other party, it simply causes pain to oneself. The evil is obvious in this case ; but where it hurts another and therefore contributes to further ill-will, the evil is even greater.

*

From anger is born all evil. Let us put out of our mind the cause for provocation given by anyone :

மறத்தல் வெகுளியை யார்மாட்டும் தீய
பிறத்தல் அதனால் வரும்.

*

Can there be any greater enemy to mankind than anger which kills laughter and joy (which indeed are the greatest of blessings on earth)?

நகையும் உவகையும் கொல்லும் சினத்தின்
பகையும் உளவோ பிற.

Tiruvalluvar appeals to our sense of values and asks. Of what value is anything that destroys joy?

*

Let him who would save himself guard against anger. The anger that is not held back is disastrous to oneself:

தன்னைத்தான் காக்கின் சினம்காக்க காவாக்கால்
தன்னையே கொல்லும் சினம்.

The appeal is here to self-interest.

*

He who thinks anger is a profitable or worthy thing and yields to it is bound to suffer the evil thereof even like the fool that hits the ground with his hand:

சினத்தைப் பொருளென்று கொண்டவன் கேடு
நிலத்துஅறைந்தான் கைபிழையாது அற்று.

He who hits the ground hits himself by that act. Anger hurts the angry man, not the other. The certainty as well as the incidence of the pain are brought out by the analogy.

*

Great may be the wrong ; like many-tongued fire it may burn, but it is worth while yet to struggle and rein back one's anger, if at all possible :

இணர்எரி தோய்வுஅன்ன இன்னா செயினும்
புணரின் வெகுளாமை நன்று.

The poet goes mentally through the difficulties that arise in the practice of what he preaches. This is Tiruvalluvar's special characteristic when dealing with any subject.

*

There is nothing lost by avoiding anger. On the contrary it will be seen that what is sought to be attained comes quicker if anger is avoided :

உள்ளியது எல்லாம் உடன்எய்தும் உள்ளத்தால்
உள்ளான் வெகுளி எனின்.

This is the experience of the self-controlled and is held out to strengthen the aspirant.

DO NOT CAUSE HARM

Chapter 32

The best punishment for those who do evil to you, is to shame them by returning good for evil :

இன்னாசெய் தாரை ஒறுத்தல் அவர்நாண
நன்னயம் செய்து விடல்.

This may appear to be a platitude. Actual experiment will disclose how effective the advice is. The pain felt by the wrong-doer in his shame is greater than any that anger could inflict on him.

*

Is there anything in much learning if it does not make a man feel the pain of others as keenly as the pain in his own body and avoid causing it ?

அறிவினான் ஆகுவது உண்டோ பிறிதின்நோய்
தந்நோய்போல் போற்றாக் கடை.

*

When man has experienced pain and knows what it is, how can he wantonly cause it to others ?

தன்உயிர்க்கு இன்னாமை தானறிவான் என்கொலோ
மன்னுயிர்க்கு இன்னா செயல்.

*

The pain that a man causes to another in the forenoon returns to him that very afternoon :

பிறர்க்குஇன்னா முற்பகல் செய்யின் தமக்குஇன்னா
பிற்பகல் தாமே வரும்.

The law of cause and effect brings unfailing retribution to the sinner.

THE FLEETING WORLD

Chapter 34

Like the crowd that gathers to see a play comes dazzling wealth. It disappears like the gathering which melts away when the play is over :

கூத்தாட்டு அவைக்குழாத்து அற்றே பெருஞ்செல்வம்
போக்கும் அதுவிளிந் தற்று.

The full force of the comparison can be realised by those who have seen the bare ground in the morning after the village play is over and all that dazzled overnight is gone, leaving nothing behind but dust.

*

We imagine the day is something by itself. But to those who can see the truth, the day is in reality nothing but the relentless movement of the saw that unremittingly saws through life :

நாள்என ஒன்றுபோல் காட்டி உயிர்ஈரும்
வாளது உணர்வார்ப் பெறின்.

*

Do that which is good without delay for you must do it before the tongue fails and the last hiccup seizes you :

நாச்செற்று விக்குள்மேல் வாராமுன் நல்வினை
மேற்சென்று செய்யப் படும்.

*

Wondrous indeed is this world where one who was yesterday may not be found to-day :

நெருநல் உளன்ஒருவன் இன்றுஇல்லை என்னும்
பெருமை உடைத்துஇவ் வுலகு.

*

We cannot be certain of living the next minute. But we are not content with even a million plans :

ஒருபொழுதும் வாழ்வது அறியார் கருதுப
கோடியும் அல்ல பல.

*

The soul's connection with the body is just that of the bird's to its nest. The bird leaves it joyfully to fly in the air :

குடம்பை தனித்துஒழியப் புள்பறந் தற்றே
உடம்பொடு உயிரிடை நட்பு.

*

The soul is indeed a homeless wanderer. It stays for a brief time in the body, as the homeless wretch who takes shelter under some roof, only to leave it at the earliest call :

> புக்கில் அமைந்தின்று கொல்லோ உடம்பினுள்
> துச்சில் இருந்த உயிர்க்கு.

RENUNCIATION

Chapter 35

As one by one you detach yourself from the things of the world you are saved from pain in respect of it :

> யாதனின் யாதனின் நீங்கியான் நோதல்
> அதனின் அதனின் இலன்.

Attachment being a source of pain, every renouncement brings happiness. It need not be done all at one time. The advantage is not lost by spreading it out. Nor need renunciation wait until you are prepared to renounce all. As each thing is renounced, to that extent pain is escaped. Loss of goods is not loss but an escape from pain inevitably associated with it.

*

The absence of something to that extent makes it easier to give it up wholly, i.e., even the thought of it. Possession tends to bring the mind back to delusion and therefore is a hindrance :

> இயல்பாகும் நோன்பிற்குஒன் று இன்மை உடைமை
> மயலாகும் மற்றும் பெயர்த்து.

It is true that there is no renunciation where the mind dwells on what has been exter-

nally given up. But one must begin by giving up the thing. Otherwise we give ourselves no chance.

*

If one's heart is set on ending the round of births, there is no purpose in keeping any attachments alive. Even the body is a burden to be got rid of soon :

மற்றும் தொடர்ப்பாடு எவன்கொல் பிறப்புஅறுக்கல்
உற்றார்க்கு உடம்பும் மிகை.

*

Pain of all kinds holds him in its relentless grip who fondly holds on to the things of the world:

பற்றி விடாஅ இடும்பைகள் பற்றினைப்
பற்றி விடாஅ தவர்க்கு.

*

Those who renounce wholly, i.e., giving up even the thought of things to be desired, have saved themselves. The rest are deluded and are still in the net :

தலைப்பட்டார் தீரத் துறந்தார் மயங்கி
வலைப்பட்டார் மற்றை யவர்.

*

Deliverance comes only with the abandonment of attachments. Else the fleeting world must be one's home again and again :

பற்றுஅற்ற கண்ணே பிறப்புஅறுக்கும் மற்று
நிலையாமை காணப் படும்.

Mere privation enforced on oneself will not help. What is required is the giving up of attachment and desire.

*

Let attachment to the Lord be your one attachment. That attachment will help you to free yourself from other attachments.

பற்றுக பற்றுஅற்றான் பற்றினை அப்பற்றைப்
பற்றுக பற்று விடற்கு.

TRUE KNOWLEDGE

Chapter 36

The miseries of life are born of error that deems the worthless as things of value :

பொருளல் அல்லவற்றைப் பொருள்என்று உணரும்
மருளான்ஆம் மாணாப்பிறப்பு.

The cause of all our griefs is that we base life on false values. Life based on true values ends in deliverance.

*

Heaven is nearer than the earth they stand on to the enlightened who have freed themselves from the entanglement of doubt :

ஐயத்தின் நீங்கித் தெளிந்தார்க்கு வையத்தின்
வானம் நணியது உடைத்து.

*

If there is no true understanding, all the knowledge that the five senses give is of no avail :

ஐயுணர்வு எய்தியக் கண்ணும் பயமின்றே
மெய்யுணர் வில்லா தவர்க்கு.

*

True understanding is that which uncovers and shows the reality behind the apparent and diverse exteriors of all things :

> *எப்பொருள் எத்தன்மைத் தாயினும் அப்பொருள்*
> *மெய்ப்பொருள் காண்ப தறிவு.*

The enlightened man perceives the one immanent substance in the diverse phenomenal appearances of the world.

*

Those who have learnt to perceive the Real will surely take the path leading to deliverance from rebirth :

> *கற்றீண்டு மெய்ப்பொருள் கண்டார் தலைப்படுவர்*
> *மற்றீண்டு வாரா நெறி.*

*

Root out the three evils, Desire, Anger and Delusion, and all grief shall end :

> *காமம் வெகுளி மயக்கம் இவைமூன்றன்*
> *நாமம் கெடக்கெடும் நோய்.*

RENOUNCING OF DESIRE

The desirelessness recommended in oriental philosophy does not appeal to the modern mind which seeks to live in hope and faith in human effort. But religious dogma apart, detachment is recognised as a great and necessary virtue in human endeavour. The philosophy of non-desire is intimately associated with detachment in work.

*

Chapter 37

Desire is the seed out of which is born the unending cycle of birth and death :

அவாஎன்ப எல்லா உயிர்க்குமெஞ் ஞான்றும்
தவாஅப் பிறப்புஈனும் வித்து.

*

There is no worthier object to be desired than deliverance from birth, and this desire can be fulfilled if we renounce desires :

வேண்டுங்கால் வேண்டும் பிறவாமை மற்றது
வேண்டாமை வேண்ட வரும்.

*

There is no possession so great as Non-desire either in this world or in the worlds beyond :

வேண்டாமை அன்ன விழுச்செல்வம் ஈண்டுஇல்லை
ஆண்டும் அஃதுஒப்பது இல்.

*

Purity is attained by freedom from Desire. And this freedom from Desire can be attained if one sincerely desires to attain the Real :

தூஉய்மை என்பது அவாவின்மை மற்றது
வாஅய்மை வேண்ட வரும்.

If the desire to attain the Real is truly strong, the dropping of any form of worldly desire becomes easy.

*

It is only those who have given up Desire also that can be said to have renounced. Those who have not done this have not truly renounced :

அற்றவர் என்பார் அவாஅற்றார் மற்றையார்
அற்றாக அற்றது இலர்.

Mere external giving up is not enough.

*

Desire is the greatest deceiver. Dread and guard against it. This vigilance is the whole of the moral code:

அஞ்சுவது ஓரும் அறனே ஒருவனை
வஞ்சிப்பது ஓரும் அவா.

*

If the pain of pains called Desire be kept out one can even in this life attain unbroken happiness :

இன்பம் இடையறாது ஈண்டு அவாவெனும்
துன்பத்துள் துன்பம் கெடின்.

THE LAW OF KARMA

The doctrines of Karma as enunciated in Hindu Shastras is accepted in toto and without any modification in the Kural. ஊழ் is the Tamil word for the Law of Karma, by which the sum of man's thoughts, desires and actions becomes his start in the next birth or re-embodiment of his soul.

Neither Karma nor its Tamil equivalent ஊழ் is to be mistaken for belief in blind luck. The Hindu doctrine of Karma links all good and bad luck in one birth to effort in previous births. Men reap the just and natural reward of every act and build their natures and tendencies as a result thereof. The law is unfailing in its rigour, but the account is not closed by death, but carried on from one birth to another. Causes not traceable to oneself now must be traced to oneself in past births.

*

Chapter 38

The industry that produces wealth and the indolence that brings about adversity in this life are brought about by how you lived in the previous life. Past deeds produce industry and indolence which are the apparent causes of the acquisition and the loss of wealth in this life :

*ஆகூழால் தோன்றும் அசைவின்மை கைப்பொருள்
போகூழால் தோன்றும் மடி.*

The doctrine of *Karma* is not inconsistent with the relation between work and wealth.

*

Folly seizes even the wise when it is decreed by the law that they must lose their possessions, and the dull become shrewd when their past good deeds are ripe for being rewarded by prosperity :

பேதைப் படுக்கும் இழவுஊழ் அறிவுஅகற்றும்
ஆகல்ஊழ் உற்றக் கடை.

*

Men are of two categories. Some are decreed by the law of Karma to be prosperous and some are decreed to be wise :

இருவேறு உலகத்து இயற்கை திருவேறு
தெள்ளியர் ஆதலும் வேறு.

i.e., the wise need not necessarily be prosperous, and the prosperous need not be intellectually very capable.

*

Prosperity comes by the decree of the law of previous good and bad deeds. The best efforts in this life may not produce good results where it is not so decreed, and the least may yield prosperity when it is so ordained :

நல்லவை எல்லாஅந் தீயவாம் தீயவும்
நல்லவாம் செல்வம் செயற்கு.

*

The possession that do not belong to one according to the unchangeable decree of Karma cannot be retained in spite of the most vigilant care, and that which belongs to a man by that decree cannot be lost even if he is most careless about it :

பரியினும் ஆகாவாம் பால்அல்ல உய்த்துச்
சொரியினும் போகா தம.

*

Even those who have no possession to renounce will not give up the world and earn the fruits of renunciation, because they have not earned that wisdom by previous good deeds :

துறப்பார்மன் துப்புரவு இல்லார் உறற்பால
ஊட்டா கழியு மெனின்.

It may be easy for the poor and homeless to become hermits, but they do not, and struggle with poverty and continue wallowing in worldly attachments and misery, because they have not earned by their past deeds a mind inclined to renunciation.

*

When men have good luck as a result of good deeds in past births, they accept it without raising any question and enjoy the full benefit of it. But when they get bad luck, they complain and vex themselves. Truly men are unreasonable !

நன்றுஆங்கால் நல்லவாக் காண்பவர் அன்றுஆங்கால்
அல்லற் படுவது எவன்.

SECOND BOOK OF KURAL

GOVERNMENT

THE PROSPEROUS STATE

Chapter 39

The six essentials for a prosperous State are an adequate army, an industrious people, ample food resources, wise and alert Ministers of State, alliance with foreign powers and dependable fortifications :

படைகுடி கூழ்அமைச்சு நட்புஅரண் ஆறும்
உடையான் அரசருள் ஏறு.

*

They are fit to be kings who possess in unfailing measure fearlessness, liberality, wisdom and enthusiasm in action :

அஞ்சாமை ஈகை அறிவுஊக்கம் இந்நான்கும்
எஞ்சாமை வேந்தற்கு இயல்பு.

*

The necessary characteristics of a good ruler are diligence, learning, and courage :

தூங்காமை கல்வி துணிவுடைமை இம்மூன்றும்
நீங்கா நிலன்ஆள் பவற்கு.

*

He alone deserves to be called King who never swerves from Dharma, who puts Adharma out of his kingdom, and whose military honour is unsullied :

அறன்இழுக்காது அல்லவை நீங்கி மறன்இழுக்கா
மான முடையது அரசு.

*

These being the prescribed and expected royal qualities, the duties of the ruler are production of wealth, conservation of resources, defence of the State and right distribution of wealth. He alone is a king who performs these duties well :

இயற்றலும் ஈட்டலும் காத்தலும் காத்த
வகுத்தலும் வல்லது அரசு.

*

If the ruler is accessible and is not harsh in speech and behaviour, the State will prosper :

காட்சிக்கு எளியன் கடுஞ்சொல்லன் அல்லனேல்
மீக்கூறும் மன்னன் நிலம்.

*

If the king acts according to the law and protects his people, he will be regarded as a true ruler :

முறைசெய்து காப்பாற்றும் மன்னவன் மக்கட்கு
இறைஎன்று வைக்கப் படும்.

The law in ancient India was not made by legislators, but was to be culled from the scriptures and from established custom.

*

The world will rest under the umbrella of the King who has the quality of listening to the advice of his ministers even when it is unpleasant:

செவிகைப்பச் சொல்பொறுக்கும் பண்புடை வேந்தன்
கவிகைக்கீழ்த் தங்கும் உலகு.

ACTION

Chapters 47 & 48

In every action there are the three elements of destruction, production and value. The quality and measure of each of these three elements should be weighed before undertaking any action :

அழிவதூஉம் ஆவதூஉம் ஆகி வழிபயக்கும்
ஊதியமும் சூழ்ந்து செயல்.

*

The prince whose undertakings are carefully launched after deliberation with a body of tried counsellors will find no impediment in the achievement of his object :

தெரிந்த இனத்தொடு தேர்ந்தெண்ணிச் செய்வார்க்கு
அரும்பொருள் யாதொன்றும் இல்.

*

The wise do not launch an undertaking by which, for a possible future gain, they will lose what is already got :

ஆக்கம் கருதி முதலிழக்கும் செய்வினை
ஊக்கார் அறிவுடை யார்.

The wise prince conserves what is already gained before entering on a doubtful undertaking.

*

Ill-considered aggressive operations serve only to organise and strengthen the enemy :

வகையறச் சூழாது எழுதல் பகைவரைப்
பாத்திப் படுப்பதோர் ஆறு.

பாத்திப் படுத்தல் is an agricultural operation—to make ridges and prepare the field for proper growth of seedlings. Ill-considered aggression serves only to mobilise the enemy's resources.

*

At the same time, a merely passive attitude is ruinous if the occasion calls for action :

செய்தக்க அல்ல செயக்கெடும் செய்தக்க
செய்யாமை யானும் கெடும்.

*

Think out fully before launching out on action. To think of devising ways and means in the course of the action is fatal :

எண்ணித் துணிக கருமம் துணிந்தபின்
எண்ணுவம் என்பது இழுக்கு.

Compare Ch. 68 (1) :

சூழ்ச்சி முடிவு துணிவெய்தல் அத்துணிவு
தாழ்ச்சியுள் தங்குதல் தீது.

i.e., Think well before resolving on action. Hesitation after once the decision is taken is bad. These two are complementary principles of action.

*

The energy that is spent on action without being first adequately spent on planning it out, will be empty of results, whatever may be the man-power placed on the field :

ஆற்றின் வருந்தா வருத்தம் பலர்நின்று
போற்றினும் பொத்துப் படும்.

*

The means adopted should be such as would not be condemned by the enlightened world which never approves of unworthy means :

எள்ளாத எண்ணிச் செயல்வேண்டும் தம்மொடு
கொள்ளாத கொள்ளாது உலகு.

The 'world' in Indian classics, Sanskrit as well as Tamil, means 'enlightened people'. It is not the mere majority of the population.

*

Many are those whose ambition has led them into aggressive campaigns without properly estimating the strength at their command, taking them to destruction :

உடைத்தம் வலிஅறியார் ஊக்கத்தின் ஊக்கி

இடைக்கண் முரிந்தார் பலர்.

*

He meets his end speedily who does not behave wisely towards alien powers and who, without knowing the limitations of his own strength, loses himself in self-admiration :

அமைந்துஆங்கு ஒழுகான் அளவுஅறியான் தன்னை

வியந்தான் விரைந்து கெடும்.

•

Too great a load of even peacock-feathers will break the axle-tree of the cart :

பீலிபெய் சாகாடும் அச்சிறும் அப்பண்டம்

சால மிகுத்துப் பெயின்.

An incisive comparison to warn over-confident powers that indulge too much in the exhibition of their strength—either against outside powers or internally.

It may be a surprise to many that the words *அச்சு*, *சாகாடு*, *பண்டம்*, whose shape suggests

a pure Tamil origin are अक्ष, शकट and भाण्ड respectively, in Sanskrit.

*

The warning against an aggressive campaign carried too far is enforced in another incisive simile.

The tree-climber can negotiate the branches up to a limit. If his enthusiasm takes him beyond the limit, he falls and meets with death :

நுனிக்கொம்பர் ஏறினார் அஃது இறந்து ஊக்கின்
உயிர்க்கு இறுதியாகி விடும்.

*

It is not a great misfortune for a state if its revenues are limited, provided the expenditure is kept within bounds :

ஆகாறு அளவு இட்டிதாயினும் கேடில்லை
போகாறு அகலாக் கடை.

*

The seeming splendour of a career carried on without adjustment to means, will suddenly disappear leaving no vestige behind :

அளவறிந்து வாழாதான் வாழ்க்கை உளபோல
இல்லாகித் தோன்றாக் கெடும்.

JUDGING THE TIME

Chapter 49

Is there anything impossible if the right means are adopted and the right hour is chosen ?

அருவினை என்ப உளவோ கருவியால்
காலம் அறிந்து செயின்.

Tamil has absorbed some Sanskrit words so thoroughly that one may not even note them as such. கருவி is an example of this kind : कृ, *do.*

*

The kings who desire to conquer wait calmly for the right time to arrive for striking :

காலம் கருதி இருப்பர் கலங்காது
ஞாணம் கருது பவர்.

கலங்காது, without losing their heads, without being tempted into premature action.

*

The restraint of the energetic is like the rearward steps that the fighting ram always takes before charging :

ஊக்க முடையான் ஒடுக்கம் பொருதகர்
தாக்கற்குப் பேரும் தகைத்து.

Ram-fighting was, apparently, an amusement known to the Tamils of Tiruvalluvar's days.

*

The anger of the wise does not exhibit its heat immediately on provocation, but smoulders within until the time arrives for action :

> பொள்ளென ஆங்கே புறம்வேரார் காலம்பார்த்து
> உள்வேர்ப்பர் ஒள்ளி யவர்.

*

Do not stint in courtesies, but show obsequious humility before your enemy ; when the time arrives for action, you will be able to make him bow his head before you :

> செறுநரைக் காணின் சுமக்க இறுவரை
> காணின் கிழக்காம் தலை.

கிழக்காம் தலை=The head will go down. This may mean, as the commentator interprets, will roll down, *i.e.*, by death. But it is perhaps more in keeping with the spirit of Tiruvalluvar's teaching to take it as bowing in subordination.

*

The fine balance and practical wisdom that characterise Kural are well illustrated by the following precepts that set off the above insistence on biding one's time.

Occasion comes but rarely. When it comes, seize it promptly if you are intent on a great act :

எய்தற்கு அரியது இயைந்தக்கால் அந்நிலையே
செய்தற்கு அரிய செயல்.

*

Imitate the stork in biding your time when it has not arrived ; but when the time is ripe, act with swift and sure aim, even as the stork does :

கொக்குஒக்க கூம்பும் பருவத்து மற்றஅதன்
குத்துஒக்க சீர்த்த இடத்து.

TACTICS

Chapter 50

This chapter is almost wholly devoted to military tactics.

Till you find the place suitable for surrounding the opposing force, do not begin your attack, and do not commit the fatal mistake of underestimating the enemy's strength :

தொடங்கற்க எவ்வினையும் எள்ளற்க முற்றும்
இடங்கண்ட பின் அல்லது.

*

Even if your force is numerous and eager, defensive fortifications are not to be neglected, as that advantage helps in many ways :

முரண்சேர்ந்த மொய்ம்பி னவர்க்கும் அரண்சேர்ந்து ஆம்
ஆக்கம் பலவும் தரும்.

*

Though you are weaker in your army, if you choose the right place to give battle and your operations are conducted with care, you may win as if you had a bigger army :

ஆற்றாரும் ஆற்றி அடுப இடன்அறிந்து
போற்றார்கண் போற்றிச் செயின்.

*

The enemy's plans will be upset if you attack choosing an advantageous place, and if your forces are well protected :

எண்ணியார் எண்ணம் இழப்பர் இடன்அறிந்து
துன்னியார் துன்னிச் செயின்.

*

If full thought is spent over the plan of operations and you are able to choose your own place of action, there is no need for other support ; the courage of your men will carry victory :

அஞ்சாமை அல்லால் துணைவேண்டா எஞ்சாமை
எண்ணி இடத்தால் செயின்.

*

With a large army you should not give battle in a place fit only for a smaller force ; for then your full force will not have room for action and is likely to be demoralised :

சிறுபடையான் செல்லிடம் சேரின் உறுபடையான்
ஊக்கம் அழிந்து விடும்.

*

Even though their fortifications and army may be weaker, it is not easy to attack and overcome those who have the advantage of operating in their native country :

சிறைநலனும் சீரும் இலரெனினும் மாந்தர்
உறைநிலத்தோடு ஒட்டல் அரிது.

*

The importance of favourable time is stressed by the simile of the owl being defeated by the crow if the fight is during daytime. The difference wrought by a right choice of place is brought out by the analogy of the crocodile and the boat.

In deep waters, the crocodile triumphs, but out of the water it is powerless :

நெடும்புனலுள் வெல்லும் முதலை அடும்புனலின்
நீங்கின் அதனைப் பிற.

*

The crow defeats the owl in daytime. The kings who intend to defeat the operations of their strong enemies must choose the right time :

பகல்வெல்லும் கூகையைக் காக்கை இகல்வெல்லும்
வேந்தர்க்கு வேண்டும் பொழுது. [49-1]

*

The strong-wheeled chariot cannot be driven on the sea, and the boat that moves swiftly on the water cannot be used on land :

கடலோடா கால்வல் நெடுந்தேர் கடலோடும்
நாவாயும் ஓடா நிலத்து.

CHOOSING THE EXECUTIVE

Chapters 51 & 52

Before entrusting a man with power, test his loyalty by putting him through trials in respect of his attachment to religion, wealth, pleasure and life :

> அறம்பொருள் இன்பம் உயிரச்சம் நான்கின்
> திறம் தெரிந்து தேறப்படும்.

i. e., see whether his loyalty breaks down under the stress of his attachment to these several objects that govern men's actions. உயிரச்சம் is the fear of losing life, and the test is to see whether he is loyal to the king even when under fear of imminent death.

*

Birth in a good family, freedom from defects, moral and intellectual, and a sensitiveness to public censure,—these are the necessary qualifications for being chosen to high office :

> குடிப்பிறந்து குற்றத்தின் நீங்கி வடுப்பரியும்
> நாண் உடையான் கட்டே தெளிவு.

*

Even those who have successfully acquired rare learning and are shown to be free from

defects will betray some ignorance under close examination :

அரியகற்று ஆசு அற்றார் கண்ணும் தெரியுங்கால்
இன்மை அரிதே வெளிறு.

That is, probation should finally confirm the choice even if every other test is satisfied.

*

But as perfect men are not available in the world, a very practical and moderate prescription is given.

Test and find out the good and bad points and see which predominates, and decide :

குணநாடி குற்றமும் நாடி அவற்றுள்
மிகைநாடி மிக்க கொளல்.

*

The touchstone for discriminating the qualified from the unqualified, is conduct :

பெருமைக்கும் ஏனைச் சிறுமைக்கும் தத்தம்
கருமமே கட்டளைக் கல்.

There are other indications but the conclusive test is a man's conduct.

*

Do not choose men who have no relatives. Having no social ties, they do not fear social blame and are therefore not to be depended on :

அற்றாரைத் தேறுதல் ஓம்புக மற்றுஅவர்
பற்று இலர் நாணார் பழி.

The experience of administrators shows this to be an important consideration, observed in practice everywhere.

*

Choosing by affection, without making sure that the necessary qualifications are possessed, will bring every form of disaster :

காதன்மை கந்தா அறிவுஅறியார்த் தேறுதல்
பேதைமை எல்லாம் தரும்.

*

Entrust work to men, only after testing them. But after they have been so appointed, accept their service without distrust. It is wrong to choose men without care and equally wrong to distrust men whom you have chosen :

தேறற்க யாரையும் தேராது தேர்ந்தபின்
தேறுக தேறும் பொருள்.

தேரான் தெளிவும் தெளிந்தான்கண் ஐயுறவும்
தீரா இடும்பை தரும்.

Those who have had to do with the organisation cf unofficial national work, where the non-coercive and voluntary character of the bond that holds leaders and workers together in service

brings out the true and natural conditions of efficient administration, would recognise the comprehensiveness and accuracy of analysis of the qualifications mentioned below for the selection of men.

*

Loyalty, a discriminating mind, clear-headedness, freedom from the lure of property, are the four essential qualifications :

அன்பு அறிவு தேற்றம் அவாவின்மை இந்நான்கும்
நன்குடையான் கட்டே தெளிவு.

If any of these elements fail, one will have to repent the selection.

*

Again, in spite of every other test being satisfied, there are some who are not suitable by reason of the nature of the particular work to be entrusted to them :

எனைவகையால் தேறியக் கண்ணும் வினைவகையான்
வேறு ஆகும் மாந்தர் பலர்.

*

Men should be appointed to duties, who have the ability needed for their performance and the resourcefulness to meet the situations arising therein. Everything will go wrong if you

nominate one out of mere friendship or admiration :

அறிந்துஆற்றிச் செய்கிற்பாற்கு அல்லால் வினைதான்
சிறந்தானென்று ஏவற்பாற் றன்று.

*

Transfer full responsibility to the man, once you fix upon him. We cannot get the full value of a man if we do not trust him fully :

வினைக்குஉரிமை நாடிய பின்றை அவனை
அதற்குஉரிய னாகச் செயல்.

இதனை இதனால் இவன்முடிக்கும் என்றுஆய்ந்து
அதனை அவன்கண் விடல்.

அவன்கண் விடல் and *உரியனாகச் செயல்*, bring out the complete entrustment of responsibility.

*

Fortune will desert him who does not love and trust his diligent and efficient agent :

வினைக்கண் வினையுடையான் கேண்மை வேறாக
நினைப்பானை நீங்கும் திரு.

*

If the king unceasingly looks after the upright conduct of his executive, the State will not go wrong :

நாடோறு நாடுக மன்னன் வினைசெய்வான்
கோடாமை கோடாது உலகு.

LOOKING AFTER THE TRIBE

Chapter 53

This is a chapter on the policy of holding together one's relatives.

The Tamil classics lay great stress on the duty of conserving the affection of relatives. It is deemed a moral obligation to keep them well-fed and clothed out of one's wealth,—a system that the Indian social reformers of the nineteenth century thought was responsible for blocking the progress of the country.

Individualism with competition as the socio-economic basis of life was neither entirely rejected nor entirely accepted in Indian culture. The man and all his relatives formed a unit, and all such units together formed society. The members of a unit shared among themselves equally. Each was expected to toil also under the chief's instructions and moral influence, up to the measure of his capacity. He had the right to be maintained in equal status with everyone else in that group independently of the measure of his ability to contribute to its wealth. There was thus 'communism' within this limited sphere. The units thus composed competed with one another. There was thus recognition of the principle of property and competition as among the groups formed

on the basis of relationship. No one was compelled by law to remain within the fold. He could rebel and get away from his relatives. But so long as he remained within it, he was entitled to be looked after. For the man with a larger earning capacity to leave the fold, with the selfish object of excluding his relatives from sharing in the fruits of his toil, was considered a shameful sin against the culture of the land. There was thus a semi-coercive basis for the system. The modern conception of communism is a state-wide and state-enforced system to which serious objections are raised by individualists. The modern conception of individualist society, too, is based on a state-enforced freedom of the individual and a ruthless state-wide application of the principle of competition. The சுற்றந்தழால் idea is a very old compromise between the two systems. The problems are millenniums old, and the varying solutions too are of like age. If evils can be pointed out against a system of family dependence, so also can serious objections be pointed out against the communist or socialist order. Even as adherents of the latter admit the defects, but plead that we must choose the lesser of two evils and suggest various remedies and adjustments to mitigate the defects, so also can the சுற்றந்தழால் plan of life be defended, and mitigated in respect of defects. Perhaps the necessary adjustments are easier in this case. The world seems to be coming back in a curious way to old ideas. சுற்றம் need not necessarily, though it generally does, mean relatives. It is

inclusive of others received as dependants on the same terms. The word literally means "those that surround".

சுற்றந்தழால் is not nepotism, *i.e.*, forcing one's relatives on the State. It is sharing one's own lawful possessions with them, and not defrauding the State in the interest of one's relatives, which is nepotism. The latter is, alas, that which prevails in countries prematurely forced from the *சுற்றந்தழால்* culture into the individualist civilisation by adventitious circumstances. The instinct and moral compulsion of helping one's relatives are there, being an inheritance of the old culture, but find outlet in a wrong channel.

The distribution of the benefits of wealth among relatives and other dependants is not merely laid down as a moral virtue, but is justified as a plan of life with an aim. It secures happiness for society by the intrinsic joy of social intercourse and by mutual support against common dangers. Go to the crow and learn, thou selfish man, says the poet.

*

The crow does not hide it when it finds something to pick and eat, but cries out to its fellows and then starts eating. Prosperity comes only to men who develop this disposition :

காக்கை கரவா கரைந்துஉண்ணும் ஆக்கமும்
அன்ன நீரார்க்கே உள.

*

Those relatives that go away for some reason will come back as soon as you have discovered the cause of their desertion in yourself and the defect is removed :

தமராகித் தன்துறந்தார் சுற்றம் அமராமைக்
காரணம் இன்றி வரும்.

So if relations desert you, you should not blame or hate them, but examine yourself and take steps to remove the cause.

*

If any go away but come back not for affection but for a known object of their own, do not summarily reject them. Do what they want, but before taking them back into confidence wait and test them :

உழைப்பிரிந்து காரணத்தின் வந்தானை வேந்தன்
இழைத்து இருந்து எண்ணிக்கொளல்.

A shrewd piece of advice !

VIGILANCE

Chapter 54

The neglectfulness that is apt to arise out of the intoxication of great joy is more harmful then even inordinate anger :

இறந்த வெகுளியின் தீதே சிறந்த
உவகை மகிழ்ச்சியின் சோர்வு.

*

Those who are not vigilant can never attain greatness. This applies to all orders of life and all codes accept this conclusion :

பொச்சாப்பார்க்கு இல்லை புகழ்மை அதுஉலகத்து
எப்பால் நூலோர்க்கும் துணிவு.

*

To the languid and neglectful, wealth can give no benefits, even as fortifications cannot give security to cowards :

அச்ச முடையார்க்கு அரண் இல்லை ஆங்கு இல்லை
பொச்சாப் புடையார்க்கு நன்கு.

*

There is nothing so good as to be vigilant in dealing with everyone and at all times without any lapse :

இழுக்காமை யார்மாட்டும் என்றும் வழுக்காமை
வாயின் அதுஒப்பது இல்.

Most practical and all-embracing advice,—useful to all and not only to princes, and applicable to the problems of moral conduct as much as to worldly affairs.

*

Watch beforehand. He who is not vigilant will repent it too late :

முன்னுறக் காவாது இழுக்கியான் தன்பிழை
பின்னூறு இரங்கி விடும்.

*

There is nothing that is impossible if one brings to bear on one's work a vigilant and resourceful mind :

அரியஎன்று ஆகாத இல்லைபொச் சாவாக்
கருவியால் போற்றிச் செயின்.

*

The following is yet another example of Tiruvalluvar's method of giving psychological aids over and above laying down ideals.

When you are feeling elated by your prosperity, think of those who in the past were ruined by lapse of vigilance :

இகழ்ச்சியின் கெட்டாரை உள்ளுக தாம்தம்
மகிழ்ச்சியின் மைந்துறும் போழ்து.

*

Every aspiration may indeed be achieved if one knows to keep his aim ever before his mind:

உள்ளியது எய்தல் எளிதுமன் மற்றும்தான்
உள்ளியது உள்ளப் பெறின்.

The will to achieve is a powerful factor and this is emphasised here.

JUST RULE

Chapter 55

All Dharma and all the codes of teachers are after all on the king's good government :

அந்தணர் நூற்கும் அறத்திற்கும் ஆதியாய்
நின்றது மன்னவன் கோல்.

*

The world lies at the feet of the king who rules with benevolent regard for his people :

குடிதழீஇக் கோல்ஓச்சும் மாநில மன்னன்
அடிதழீஇ நிற்கும் உலகு.

குடிதழீஇ denotes great loving concern for the people and government in accordance with their just wishes.

*

It is not the strength of arms that gives success in battle to the king, but his rule and its uprightness :

வேலன்று வென்றி தருவது மன்னவன்
கோல்அதுவும் கோடாது எனின்.

*

The king will fall and destroy himself who is not easy of access or does not give the fullest consideration to representations or does not follow established procedure and decide justly :

எண்பதத்தான் ஓராமுறை செய்யா மன்னவன்
தண்பதத்தான் தானே கெடும்.

*

It is not matter for blame, but the office and duty of a king, who should protect his subjects against external foes and look after their welfare, to be severed with those that are found to offend against the law :

குடிபுறங்காத்து ஓம்பிக் குற்றம் கடிதல்
வடுவன்று வேந்தன் தொழில்.

*

Capital punishment for grievous offences is like the weeding of fields, necessary for the protection of the crops :

கொலையின் கொடியாரை வேந்துஒறுத்தல் பைங்கூழ்
களைகட்டதனொடு நேர்.

OPPRESSION AND MISRULE

Chapter 56

The oppressive king who misgoverns is a worse sinner than the man who takes away another's life :

கொலைமேற்கொண் டாரின் கொடிதே அலைமேற்கொண்டு
அல்லவை செய்தொழுகும் வேந்து.

*

The tyrant's request for gifts from his people is like the armed highway-robber's demand couched in the language of politeness :

வேலொடு நின்றான் இடுஎன்றது போலும்
கோலொடு நின்றான் இரவு.

The commentator Parimelazhagar appears to have missed the humour in this. What is given to the armed dacoit is not a gift, though it is in response to a request worded as from a beggar asking for alms. What is given to a tyrannical prince in the form of gifts is likewise given in fear.

*

As the rainless sky dries up the earth, so does a king devoid of compassion destroy the people living thereon :

துளியின்மை ஞாலத்திற்கு எற்றுஅற்றே வேந்தன்
அளியின்மை வாழும் உயிர்க்கு.

The delicate balance in this simile seems to have been lost by Parimelazhagar, as a result of the conventional interpretation of ஞாலம். The absence of rain dries up the non-sentient earth. What rain is to the non-sentient earth, so to the sentient beings thereon is royal concern for their walfare. Its absence dries them up, *i.e.*, destroys them. The parallelism is nearly lost by taking ஞாலம் to mean here, as it usually does, the world *and its inhabitants*.

*

Under a ruler who does not follow the law, it is a greater misery to be possessed of wealth than to be poor :

இன்மையின் இன்னாது உடைமை முறைசெய்யா
மன்னவன் கோல்கீழ்ப் படின்.

PENALTIES

Chapter 57

The principles of punishment are tersely put in the following verses. No wiser or juster principles can be laid down for the administration of justice.

The king shall impartially enquire and award punishment, which should be deterrent but not disproportionate to the offence. Let there be a severe gesture, but let the blow fall lightly. Thus shall the king maintain the prosperity of the state :

தக்காங்கு நாடி தலைச்செல்லா வண்ணத்தால்
ஒத்தாங்கு ஒறுப்பது வேந்து.

கடிதுஓச்சி மெல்ல எறிக நெடிதுஆக்கம்
நீங்காமை வேண்டு பவர்.

*

The king who oppresses and rules by frightfulness will find a speedy and certain end :

வெருவந்த செய்துஒழுகும் வெங்கோலன் ஆயின்
ஒருவந்தம் ஒல்லைக் கெடும்.

*

"Our king is cruel!" His days are over and he will soon meet his destruction who lets his people have cause to say this :

இறைகடியன் என்று உரைக்கும் இன்னாச்சொல் வேந்தன்
உறைகடுகி ஒல்லைக் கெடும்.

*

What though a man possesses great wealth? If he is difficult of access and when approached puts on a harsh countenance, his great wealth is only like haunted treasure:

அருஞ்செவ்வி இன்னா முகத்தான பெருஞ்செல்வம்
பேஎய் கண்டன்னது உடைத்து.

The treasure is there, and well-guarded, but is useless to mankind. செவ்வி is the accessibility of kings and great men.

*

Harsh speech and excessive and cruel punishments steadily reduce the king's power of resistance against his enemies, even as a file files off iron:

கடுமொழியும் கையிகந்த தண்டமும் வேந்தன்
அடுமுரண் தேய்க்கும் அரம்.

*

A cruel king gathers round him the most ignorant and worthless men and he becomes a bane on earth:

கல்லார் பிணிக்கும் கடுங்கோல் அதுவல்லது
இல்லை நிலக்குப் பொறை.

ON SPIES

Chapter 59

This is a chapter on the Intelligence department of the public service. Spies were employed not only to bring intelligence about enemies' movements, but also to assist in internal affairs. The department of spies was in the old days considered one of the most important branches of the public service.

*

The spy service and authoritative books on State-craft should be deemed as the two eyes of the king :

ஒற்றும் உரைசான்ற நூலும் இவைஇரண்டும்
தெற்றென்க மன்னவன் கண்.

*

The duty of a king is to learn at once all that happens at all times to all people :

எல்லார்க்கும் எல்லா நிகழ்பவை எஞ்ஞான்றும்
வல்லறிதல் வேந்தன் தொழில்.

The standard of efficiency was fairly high !

*

The intelligence-men were to watch closely all the executive officers of the state and the relatives of the prince as well as those that

were known to be not well disposed towards him :

வினைசெய்வார் தஞ்சுற்றம் வேண்டாதார் என்றாங்கு
அனைவரையும் ஆராய்வது ஒற்று.

It was thus part of the work of the department to watch even the officers of the State.

*

To be admitted into this service, a man should be skilled in putting on disguises that raise no suspicion. He should not be disturbed or unnerved by the scrutinising looks of those observed. He should be able under all circumstances to guard secrets and not give himself away :

கடாஅ உருவொடு கண்ணஞ்சாது யாண்டும்
உகாஅமை வல்லதே ஒற்று.

*

The garb of sanyasis and of religious orders were favourite disguises to obtain admission into places usually inaccessible :

துறந்தார் படிவத்தர் ஆகி இறந்தாராய்ந்து
என்செயினும் சோர்வுஇலது ஒற்று.

இறந்து is stepping over boundaries ordinarily prohibited. The detective exposes himself to severe castigation on this account. But he should

be able to stand all this and preserve the secret of his business : என் செயினும் சோர்வு இலது ஒற்று.

*

The service must have been fairly well-manned in numbers as well as in quality.

The information brought by a spy should not be accepted implicitly, but should be tested through another member of the service :

ஒற்றுஒற்றித் தந்த பொருளையும் மற்றுமோர்
ஒற்றினால் ஒற்றிக் கொளல்.

*

The Spy service should be so managed that the members do not know one another. Let there be corroboration through three sources of information :

ஒற்றுஒற்று உணராமை ஆள்க உடன்மூவர்
சொல்தொக்க தேறப் படும்,

Noteworthy caution that may well be followed by present-day administrations in dealing with their Intelligence Officers !

*

Do not confer any public marks of appreciation on the members of the Intelligence service. Thereby you would be disclosing what should be kept from the knowledge of others :

சிறப்பறிய ஒற்றின்கண் செய்யற்க செய்யின்
புறப்படுத்தான் ஆகும் மறை.

———

RESOLUTENESS

Chapter 60

The Kural commentator explains ஊக்கம் as the quality of mind which shows itself in eagerness for action without weakening or wavering : *மனம் மெலிதலின்றி வினை செய்தற்கண் கிளர்ச்சியுடைத் தாதல்.*

*

Real wealth is the will to action. Without it all possessions are worthless :

> *உடையர் எனப்படுவது ஊக்கம்அஃது இல்லார்*
> *உடையது உடையரோ மற்று.*

*

A vigorous mind is a true asset, other possessions are fleeting and cannot be depended upon :

> *உள்ளம் உடைமை உடைமை பொருளுடைமை*
> *நில்லாது நீங்கி விடும்.*

*

Think ever of rising higher. Let it be your only thought. Even if your object be not attained, the thought itself will have raised you :

> *உள்ளுவது எல்லாம் உயர்வுஉள்ளல் மற்றுஅது*
> *தள்ளினும் தள்ளாமை நீர்த்து.*

*

Success finds its own way to reach the man of will :

ஆக்கம் அதர்வினாய்ச் செல்லும் அசைவிலா
ஊக்கம் உடையா னுழை.

அதர்வினாய் = enquiring the way.

*

The lotus plants grow up to the height of the water. So does man rise just up to the height of his will :

வெள்ளத்து அனைய மலர்நீட்டம் மாந்தர்தம்
உள்ளத்து அனையது உயர்வு.

The limit of man's achievement is his will.

*

Huge is the elephant and possessed of sharp-pointed tusks, but it trembles before the tiger :

பரியது கூர்ங்கோட்டது ஆயினும் யானை
வெரூஉம் புலிதாக் குறின்.

*

As aspiring mind is the quality of manhood ; without it men are but wood shaped like men :

உரம்ஒருவற்கு உள்ள வெறுக்கைஅஃது இல்லார்
மரம்·மக்களாதலே வேறு.

INDUSTRIOUSNESS

Chapter 61

Family virtues (*i.e.*, inherited qualities) naturally persist, but are apt to disappear unless kept up by unflagging industry even as a temple light will go out unless the wick is properly snuffed and looked after :

குடிஎன்னும் குன்றா விளக்கம் மடிஎன்னும்
மாசூர மாய்ந்து கெடும்.

*

When men are fated to be destroyed, procrastination, forgetfulness, languor and sleep are festive boats that wait to tempt and take them :

நெடுநீர் மறவி மடிதுயில் நான்கும்
கெடுநீரார் காமக் கலன்.

*

He who falls a victim to inaction, and does not labour strenuously, first meets with censure from friends, but will finally have to put up with every one's contempt :

இடிபுரிந்து எள்ளும்சொல் கேட்பர் மடிபுரிந்து
மாண்ட உஞற்று இலவர்.

*

One can make up for many natural defects through industry :

குடியாண்மை யுள்வந்த குற்றம் ஒருவன்
மடியாண்மை மாற்றக் கெடும்.

*

The king who is fired by the spirit of ceaseless effort will find the whole world under him :

மடிஇலா மன்னவன் எய்தும் அடியளந்தான்
தாஅயது எல்லாம் ஒருங்கு.

அடியளந்தான் தாவியது = What was covered by Trivikrama Vishnu, *i.e.*, the whole world.

THE STRENUOUS LIFE

Chapter 62

Let not the magnitude of any task unman you. Strenuous effort ever brings victory :

அருமை உடைத்துஎன்று அசாவாமை வேண்டும்
பெருமை முயற்சி தரும்.

*

Guard yourself against inaction in respect of your allotted task. Man is born to action. He who fails in this is lost to the world :

வினைக்கண் வினைகெடல் ஓம்பல் வினைக்குறை
தீர்ந்தாரின் தீர்ந்தன்று உலகு.

*

The pride of being useful to others can be enjoyed only by those who are blessed with the spirit of ceaseless effort :

தாளாமை என்னும் தகைமைக்கண் தங்கிற்றே
வேளாண்மை என்னும் செருக்கு.

*

The wish to be useful to society entertained by one who is not prepared for a strenuous life

is like the fond desire of the weakling to wield weapons of war :

> தாளாண்மை இல்லாதான் வேளாண்மை பேடிகை
> வாள்ஆண்மை போலக் கெடும்.

*

He who is in love with work, and spurns pleasure, can remove the troubles of his friends and relatives and stand like a pillar for their support :

> இன்பம் விழையான் வினைவிழைவான் தன்கேளிர்
> துன்பம் துடைத்துஊன்றும் தூண்.

*

The dark elder Sister dwelleth with idleness. She of the lotus dwells in human effort :

> மடிஉளாள் மாமுகடி என்ப மடிஇலான்
> தாள்உளாள் தாமரையி னாள்.

தாமரையினாள், Sri or Lakshmi, is the younger of the two sisters; the elder sister is the goddess of misfortune.

*

No one can blame you if nature has not endowed you with superior intelligence, but to have knowledge and to fail in putting forth effort is indeed blameworthy :

பொறியின்மை யார்க்கும் பழியன்று அறிவு அறிந்து
ஆள்வினை இன்மை பழி.

*

Even if through misfortune the object aimed at is not attained, the effort pays its own wages :

தெய்வத்தான் ஆகாது எனினும் முயற்சிதன்
மெய்வருத்தக் கூலி தரும்.

That is, honest effort is its own reward. This means that every honest endeavour raises the man a step higher in the course of the evolution of the soul. In the measure of the energy put forth, there is improvement in strength of character.

*

Sustained and courageous effort enables man to see Fate turn its back and flee from the field :

ஊழையும் உப்பக்கம் காண்பர் உலைவின்றித்
தாழாது உஞற்று பவர்.

These three Kurals lay down that the world may well blame you for not making the best of your talents and putting forth your utmost effort, that sustained and courageous effort will overcome the course of past Karma, and that even if you fail to attain your object, the effort raises your character and takes you forward in the course of soul-evolution.

FORTITUDE

Chapter 63

Let not your spirit be broken down by misfortune, adversity or defeat. This chapter is devoted to impress this on the man of action. It is not the serenity of mind of the ascetic, but the unperturbed spirit of the man of action.

*

Laugh when you meet misfortune. There is nothing like this to overcome it and pass on to victory :

> இடுக்கண் வருங்கால் நகுக அதனை
> அடுத்தூர்வது அஃதொப்பது இல்.

*

Misfortune may come like a flood. But it vanishes in the wise man's mind by a thought :

> வெள்ளத்து அனைய இடும்பை அறிவுடையான்
> உள்ளத்தின் உள்ளக் கெடும்.

i.e., misfortune being but a reaction of the mind, resolute thought can overcome it and proceed to the next step to be taken.

*

Man is born to be the target of misfortune. The wise man knows this and will be unperturbed by it :

இலக்கம் உடம்பு இடும்பைக்கு என்று கலக்கத்தைக்
கையாறாக் கொள்ளாதாம் மேல்.

To lift this above the commonplace, it may be interpreted in the sense of the previous verse வெள்ளத்தனைய etc., that is to say, misfortune can but afflict the body; the mind can rise above it and frustrate it. This is more appropriate to the purpose of the chapter, which being in பொருட்பால் is not intended to stress resignation, but to teach the way to face impediments and overcome them.

*

He who does not allow a craving to grow in him for pleasure, and who understands that it is the lot of man to meet with troubles, will not feel it difficult to face misfortune:

இன்பம் விழையான் இடும்பை இயல்பென்பான்
துன்பம் உறுதல் இலன்.

*

If when enjoying good fortune, you keep your mind detached, you will be proof against grief in misfortune:

இன்பத்துள் இன்பம் விழையாதான் துன்பத்துள்
துன்பம் உறுதல் இலன்.

Those who do not grieve over difficulties, thereby make them innocuous. By not yielding to grief, misfortune can be overcome. Not to lose oneself in joy over good fortune is the means whereby strength is acquired to face misfortune.

THE GOOD MINISTER

Chapter 64

A minister should be resolute in action, have the welfare of the people at heart, possess learning and discrimination, and be ever active :

வன்கண் குடிகாத்தல் கற்று அறிதல் ஆள்வினையோடு
ஐந்துடன் மாண்டது அமைச்சு.

அமைச்சன், minister, is the Sanskrit word *amatya.*

*

He should be skilled in the art of dividing enemies, of conserving alliances made, and of regaining lost friendships :

பிரித்தலும் பேணிக் கொளலும் பிரிந்தார்ப்
பொருத்தலும் வல்லது அமைச்சு.

*

There is no such thing as a situation too intricate for the minister to solve, if he possesses both natural intellect and the learning on the subject of state-craft:

மதிநுட்பம் நூலோடு உடையார்க்கு அதிநுட்பம்
யாஉள முன்நிற் பவை.

*

Even if well-versed in the methods of action, one should also understand the current ways of the world, and act suitably :

செயற்கை அறிந்தக் கடைத்தும் உலகத்து
இயற்கை அறிந்து செயல்.

"Current" is taken from the old commentator who interprets உலகத்து இயற்கை அறிந்து செயல் as அப்பொழுது நடக்கின்ற உலகவியற்கையை அறிந்து அதனோடு பொருந்தச் செய்க.

*

There are some who, though they are good in thinking out and preparing plans, are not adept in practical action :

முறைபடச் சூழ்ந்து முடிவிலவே செய்வர்
திறப்பாடு இலாஅ தவர்.

Because they have not the resourcefulness to meet the situations that arise in the course of action.

*

The king may be one who, ignorant himself, also refuses to listen to wisdom from others. But he who serves as minister owes it as a debt to speak out what he deems to be true and good :

அறிகொன்று அறியான் எனினும் உறுதி
உழையிருந்தான் கூறல் கடன்.

"He who slays knowledge" is the phrase used to describe the man who rejects words of wisdom.

*

A minister who remains by the king's side and harbours treacherous thoughts, has the potentiality of seventy crores of opposing enemies :

பழுதுஎண்ணும் மந்திரியின் பக்கத்துள் தெவ்ஓர்
எழுபது கோடி உறும்.

THE ART OF PERSUASION

Chapter 65

This is a chapter on power of expression as an essential qualification for a successful counsellor. The emphasis on the art of persuasive speech shows that decisions were taken after debate in assemblies.

*

One may possess every other qualification; the gift of persuasive speech is a thing apart :

நாநலம் என்னும் நலன்உடைமை அந்நலம்
யாநலத்து உள்ளதூஉம் அன்று.

*

A counsellor's speech is a thing worthy of most zealous care as it may make or mar the prosperity of the whole state :

ஆக்கமும் கேடும் அதனால் வருதலால்
காத்துஓம்பல் சொல்லின்கண் சோர்வு.

*

What is good speaking ?

It should be such as would hold fast the convinced and it should be pleasing even to the unconvinced :

கேட்டார்ப் பிணிக்கும் தகைஅவாய்க் கேளாரும்
வேட்ப மொழிவதுஆம் சொல்.

*

Speak after making sure that what you say cannot be refuted by any argument on the other side :

சொல்லுக சொல்லைப் பிறிதுஓர்சொல் அச்சொல்லை
வெல்லும்சொல் இன்மை அறிந்து.

*

Neither right conduct nor any worldly good can result from talking over the head of those who are addressed. Speak suitably to the capacity and attainments of the audience :

திறன்அறிந்து சொல்லுக சொல்லை அறனும்
பொருளும் அதனின்ஊஉங்கு இல்.

*

Speak pleasingly and welcome the good ideas in what is urged on the other side. This is the way of good counsellors :

வேட்பத்தாம் சொல்லிப் பிறர்சொல் பயன்கோடல்
மாட்சியின் மாசற்றார் கோள்.

i.e., An open and receptive mind is essential for counsellors to fulfil their true function.

*

What makes a counsellor invincible in debate is a convincing style, a good memory and fearlessness :

சொலல் வல்லன் சோர்வுஇலன் அஞ்சான் அவனை
இகல்வெல்லல் யார்க்கும் அரிது.

Fearlessness is the absence of nervousness and confusion during debate.

*

The world loses no time to follow the rare counsellor who speaks weighty things with orderly coherence and sweetness of expression :

விரைந்து தொழில்கேட்கும் ஞாலம் நிரந்துஇனிது
சொல்லுதல் வல்லார்ப் பெறின்.

*

It is only those that have not learnt to speak briefly and correctly that indulge in much speaking :

பலசொல்லக் காமுறுவர் மன்றமாசு அற்ற
சில சொல்லல் தேற்றாதவர்.

*

There are flowers that blossom in plenteous cluster but bear no sweet fragrance. Like to these are those who, though learned, have no mastery of expression to convey their knowledge to others :

இணர்ஊழ்த்தும் நாறா மலர்அனையர் கற்றது
உணர விரித்துஉரையா தார்.

Learning without the power of expression is of no use to the world.

THE MORAL LAW

Chapter 66

This chapter insists on the moral law being followed in acts of State.

Avoid at all times action that is not in accordance with the moral law :

என்றும் ஒருவுதல் வேண்டும் புகழொடு
நன்றி பயவா வினை.

புகழ் and நன்றி denote, respectively, commendation by the good people of the world and conformity with the moral code.

*

Those who seek to be great, should refrain from everything that may tarnish their good name :

ஓஒதல் வேண்டும் ஒளிமாழ்கும் செய்வினை
ஆஅதும் என்னுமவர்.

*

Do not do that which good men would condemn, even if it means your helplessly looking on while your mother starves :

ஈன்றாள் பசிகாண்பா னாயினும் செய்யற்க
சான்றோர் பழிக்கும் வினை.

*

Success achieved without minding the prohibitions of the moral law brings grief in the wake of achievement :

> கடிந்த கடிந்துஓரார் செய்தார்க்கு அவைதாம்
> முடிந்தாலும் பீழை தரும்.

*

To seek to further the welfare of the State by enriching it through fraud and falsehood is like storing water in an unburnt mud pot and hoping to preserve it :

> சலத்தால் பொருள்செய்து ஏம்ஆர்த்தல் பசுமண்
> கலத்துள்நீர் பெய்துஇரீஇ யற்று.

*

The extreme practicality that Tiruvalluvar combines with his unsurpassed idealism, is illustrated by the following.

Do not do that which your better sense tells you you will afterwards regret. But if you have done such a thing, it is well you at least decide to refrain from such folly again :

> எற்றென்று இரங்குவ செய்யற்க செய்வானேல்
> மற்றுஅன்ன செய்யாமை நன்று.

EFFICIENCY IN ACTION

Chapter 67

This and the next chapter deal with the principles to be observed by an efficient Minister.

Efficiency essentially consists in resoluteness ; other things come thereafter :

வினைத்திட்பம் என்பது ஒருவன் மனத்திட்பம்
மற்றைய எல்லாம் பிற.

*

Two principles of action have been authoritatively accepted in politics. One, Do not undertake action that cannot be successful ; the other, If anything goes wrong in the course of an undertaking, do not be perturbed, but face difficulties boldly :

ஊறுஒரால் உற்றபின் ஒல்காமை இவ்விரண்டின்
ஆறுஎன்பர் ஆய்ந்தவர் கோள்.

*

Success in a great undertaking lies in so ordering one's action that the disclosure of the plan coincides with its fulfilment, *i.e.*, before it is disclosed it should have been accomplished. Premature disclosure leads to the creation of insurmountable impediments :

கடைக்கொட்கச் செய்தக்கது ஆண்மை இடைக்கொட்
எற்றா விழுமம் தரும் [கின்

*

Anyone can formulate plans, but it is only exceptional men that are able to carry out their plans to fulfilment :

சொல்லுதல் யார்க்கும் எளிய அரியவாம்
சொல்லிய வண்ணம் செயல்.

*

Some men there are in whom an unimposing appearance is coupled with great strength of mind and action, even like the little axle-pin that keeps the wheels of the great chariot in place. Appearances deceive. Do not judge men by the insignificance of their external form :

உருவுகண்டு எள்ளாமை வேண்டும் உருள்பெருந்
அச்சாணி அன்னார் உடைத்து. [தேர்க்கு

*

Plan with a clear brain, and when once you have decided and launched on an undertaking, be firm and unmoved by difficulties, and avoid dilatoriness in action :

கலங்காது கண்ட வினைக்கண் துளங்காது
தூக்கம் கடிந்து செயல்.

*

Other things are of no avail, if one does not aim at efficiency in action. He who does not cultivate this cannot make his mark in the world :

எனைத்திட்பம் எய்தியக் கண்ணும் வினைத்திட்பம்
வேண்டாரை வேண்டாது உலகு.

THE OFFENSIVE

Chapter 68

This chapter is devoted to aggressive action by princes. It displays remarkable practical wisdom, and indicates a long history of operational experience.

*

Decisions should be taken after thorough consideration. But once a decision is taken there should be no hesitation in action :

சூழ்ச்சி முடிவு துணிவுஎய்தல் அத்துணிவு
தாழ்ச்சியுள் தங்குதல் தீது.

*

There are some operations that should be lengthened out in time ; prolong them accordingly. There are some that demand promptness ; do not be dilatory in such :

தூங்குக தூங்கிச் செயற்பால தூங்கற்க
தூங்காது செய்யும் வினை.

*

Aggressive action, wherever it is feasible, is good. Where it is not likely to be successful, try other means to attain your object :

ஒல்லும்வாய் எல்லாம் வினைநன்றே ஒல்லாக்கால்
செல்லும்வாய் நோக்கிச் செயல்.

*

To undertake an aggressive operation and to abandon it without completing the discomfiture of the enemy is most harmful. Both ineffectual aggression and the incomplete removal of causes of enmity are unsafe,—like fire that is not fully extinguished. You may expect trouble to grow in course of time :

> வினைபகை என்று இரண்டின் எச்சம் நினையுங்கால்
> தீ எச்சம்போலத் தெறும்.

*

Before launching an operation, all the elements that will make for success or defeat should be thoroughly considered and not left untackled, *i.e.*, equipment, strength of forces, the favourableness or the opposite of time and place and the nature of the operation :

> பொருள்கருவி காலம் வினை இடனொடு ஐந்தும்
> இருள்தீர எண்ணிச் செயல்.

*

What has to be done to attain the end in view, the difficulties that may arise in the course of the operation and the measure of lasting gain that will finally accrue by success in the operation, should all be considered before undertaking it :

> முடிவும் இடையூறும் முற்றியாங்கு எய்தும்
> படுபயனும் பார்த்துச் செயல்.

i.e., it is well not to be aggressive if you doubt your strength to carry it out or to overcome the difficulties likely to arise ; also, if on a dispassionate consideration no great ultimate advantage appears to follow from it. Weigh the ultimate gain as against the cost of the attempt and the amount of opposition to be met with, before resolving on such operations.

*

Even after all these considerations, one should consult those who have actually gone through such operations themselves and who therefore possess intimate knowledge of them :

செய்வினை செய்வான் செயல்முறை அவ்வினை
உள்அறிவான் உள்ளம் கொளல்.

*

As one elephant is used to capture another, the experiences of one action should be used to achieve success in another :

வினையால் வினை ஆக்கிக்கோடல் நனைகவுள்
யானையால் யானையாத் தற்று.

*

Be quicker to compose differences with enemies than even in rendering good offices to allies :

நட்டார்க்கு நல்ல செயலின் விரைந்ததே
ஒட்டாரை ஒட்டிக் கொளல்.

This is interpreted alternatively and somewhat in a far-fetched way thus :

Make alliances with your opponent's enemies even more promptly than securing confirmation of friendships already gained. Whenever you have to declare war, while it is necessary promptly to strengthen existing alliances, it is well to give even greater attention to making alliances with your enemy's enemies.

ஒட்டார் is here interpreted as the enemy's enemies. Parimelazhagar favours this interpretation.

*

If your forces are weak you should take the first opportunity to yield and make peace before letting your men taste defeat and demoralisation :

உறைசிறியார் உள்நடுங்கல் அஞ்சிக் குறைபெறின்
கொள்வர் பெரியார்ப் பணிந்து.

ABOUT ENVOYS AND MESSENGERS

Chapter 69

The qualifications essential for a successful envoy are an affectionate temperament, good birth and a disposition agreeable to princes :

அன்புடைமை ஆன்ற குடிப்பிறத்தல் வேந்துஅவாம்
பண்புஉடைமை தூதுரைப்பான் பண்பு.

The first may appear to be a curious specification. *அன்புடைமை* is interpreted by the commentator as being attached to one's relatives who become hostages for the envoy's sincerity and loyalty. This appears to be somewhat of a far-fetched idea. It seems better to take it in its plain import. A man with a disposition towards peace and friendship always makes a successful envoy. One with a temperamental leaning towards hatred and battle can never be a good envoy. All the three qualities here specified are those that tend to securing the confidence of the prince to whom the envoy is sent.

*

Devotion to one's sovereign, knowledge of politics, and well-considered and effective speech are absolutely essential qualifications for all envoys :

அன்பு அறிவுஆராய்ந்த சொல்வன்மை தூதுஉரைப்
இன்றி யமையாத மூன்று. [பார்க்கு

*

The man who has to convey a challenge or message of action to an enemy prince and come back with success must be distinguished by a knowledge of politics not inferior to that of the best politicians :

நூலாருள் நூல்வல்லன் ஆகுதல் வேலாருள்
வென்றி வினைஉரைப்பான் பண்பு.

The வேல் is the most significant weapon of princes and commanders in Tamil literature.

*

Let him be sent as envoy who in abundant measure possesses natural wisdom as well as acquired knowledge of arts and sciences, and a good personality :

அறிவுஉரு ஆராய்ந்த கல்விஇம் மூன்றன்
செறிவுஉடையான் செல்க வினைக்கு.

It is noteworthy that a good personality is insisted on as much as other qualifications.

*

The speech of a successful envoy is marked by brevity, avoidance of harsh words, and a pleasing style :

தொகச்சொல்லித் தூவாத நீக்கி நகச்சொல்லி
நன்றி பயப்பதாம் தூது.

தொகச் சொல்லுதல் is to emphasise fundamentals and essentials, without over-loading the message with needless particulars and corollaries. A simple and clear message is likely to create a favourable impression, where the same proposal, if needlessly elaborated, may repel.

*

The envoy should be learned in political science, fearless before wrathful eyes, persuasive in speech, resourceful and ready-witted :

கற்றுக்கண் அஞ்சான் செலச்சொல்லிக் காலத்தால்
தக்கது அறிவதாம் தூது.

*

He should not be a mere messenger. He should know the courtesies due to men and be able to judge time and place, and think before speaking :

கடன்அறிந்து காலம் கருதி இடன்அறிந்து
எண்ணி உரைப்பான் தலை.

*

The qualifications for a mere messenger, வழி உரைப்பான், are given in the last three aphorisms of this chapter.

He should be pure in conduct, command some support in the court of the prince he is

sent to, be a man of courage and, above all, truthful :

தூய்மை துணைமை துணிவுடைமை இம்மூன்றின்
வாய்மை வழியுரைப்பான் பண்பு.

*

One who bears a prince's message should not by oversight or impatience give expression to anything that will lower the dignity of his prince or leave a scar on his honour :

விடுமாற்றம் வேந்தர்க்கு உரைப்பான் வடுமாற்றம்
வாய்சோரா வன்க ணவன்.

*

He should not mind even being killed on account of it, but should convey his message loyally, without faltering :

இறுதி பயப்பினும் எஞ்சாது இறைவற்கு
உறுதி பயப்பதுஆம் தூது.

THE DANGERS OF THE PALACE

Chapter 70

This is a chapter for those whose work keeps them near kings, telling them how to escape the dangers of courts and thrive.

*

A courtier should not absent himself too often, nor indulge in too great proximity to the king. Not too far, nor too near, like one who warms himself near a fire, this is the rule of conduct towards princes whose minds are changeful and undependable :

அகலாது அணுகாது தீக்காய்வார் போல்க
இகல்வேந்தர்ச் சேர்ந்துஒழுகு வார்.

*

Avoid casting your desire on things desired by the prince, if you wish to prosper :

மன்னர் விழைய விழையாமை மன்னரான்
மன்னிய ஆக்கம் தரும்.

*

Once suspicion enters the prince's mind, it is hard even for the cleverest to set oneself right with him. So avoid all cause for it if you desire to be safe :

போற்றின் அரியவை போற்றல் கடுத்தபின்
தேற்றுதல் யார்க்கும் அரிது.

*

Avoid, in the presence of your prince, all whispering to someone else or smiling to someone as if you and he understood something between yourselves :

செவிச்சொல்லும் சேர்ந்த நகையும் அவித்து
ஆன்ற பெரியார் அகத்து. [ஒழுகல்

*

Do not display any inquisitiveness about the prince's secret conversations with others, however important the matter may be ; wait until he says it to you if at all :

எப்பொருளும் ஓரார் தொடரார்மற்று அப்பொருள்
விட்டக்கால் கேட்க மறை.

*

Ever avoid talk concerning things that do not matter, even if the prince shows interest in them ; but concerning things that touch his interest materially, speak to him what you know without waiting to be asked :

வேட்பன சொல்லி வினை இல எஞ்ஞான்றும்
கேட்பினும் சொல்லா விடல்.

*

Do not look on your prince as your junior in years or as related in such and such wise to you; but let your behaviour be as it should be to him whose divine privilege and duty is the protection of men:

> இளையர் இனமுறையர் என்றுஇகழார் நின்ற
> ஒளியோடு ஒழுகப் படும்.

i.e., juniority of age and ties of blood should disappear and be of no effect once the sacred office of king devolves on a prince. (ஒளி is splendour, *i.e.*, the authority and duties of a king).

*

The wise minister ever acts as if he were still on probation. He does not take the prince's confidence for granted:

> கொளப்பட்டேம் என்றுஎண்ணிக் கொள்ளாத
> துளக்கற்ற காட்சி யவர். [செய்யார்

*

It would be disastrous to presume on the familiarity born of long connnexion and act contrary to etiquette:

> பழையம் எனக்கருதி பண்புஅல்ல செய்யும்
> கெழுதகைமை கேடு தரும்.

One is strongly reminded of Bacon when reading this and some other chapters of Kural. But Bacon came many centuries after Tiruvalluvar.

Great stress is laid on the ability of those serving in the king's cabinet to read his mind. This is as it must be in serving under autocratic princes or in the cabinets of modern dictators.

ASSEMBLY WORK

Chapter 72

The minister had to deal not only with the king but with a council that sat to deliberate on affairs. This chapter deals with the importance of suiting one's speech to the mood and disposition of the assembled counsellors.

*

Those who are masters of the art of speaking, take note of the disposition and mood of the assembly and choose their words and adopt a style of speech to suit them :

அவைஅறிந்து ஆராய்ந்து சொல்லுக சொல்லின்
தொகைஅறிந்த தூய்மை யவர்.

*

Good and successful speech requires a careful understanding of the disposition and receptivity of the audience and a clear understanding of the subjects talked :

இடைதெரிந்து நன்குஉணர்ந்து சொல்லுக சொல்
நடைதெரிந்த நன்மை யவர். [லின்

இடை is the receptive mood of the person approached.

*

Be radiant before those who are radiant. But before the 'white', assume the colour of slaked lime, *i.e.*, Be learned before a company of learned men. If the audience is composed of simple folk, keep back your learning and be a simple and unlearned man :

ஒளியார்முன் ஒள்ளிய ராதல் வெளியார்முன்
வான்சுதை வண்ணம் கொளல்.

*

Before an assembly of your seniors (in age or accomplishments) it is a wise rule to restrain yourself and avoid preceding them with your speech :

நன்றுஎன்ற வற்றுள்ளும் நன்றே முதுவருள்
முந்து கிளவாச் செறிவு.

*

Chapter 73

It is easy to find men ready to face death in battle, but more difficult to find men free from nervousness when having to face an assembly :

பகையகத்துச் சாவார் எளியர் அரியர்
அவையகத்து அஞ்சா தவர்.

*

Of what use is it for a man who has no physical bravery to carry a sword? So is mere

learning of no use to the man who is nervous before an assembly of men of keen intellect:

வாளொடுஎன் வன்கண்ணர் அல்லார்க்கு நூலொடுஎன்
நுண்ணவை அஞ்சு பவர்க்கு.

A GOOD NATION

Chapter 74

The things to be secured for a happy state are very accurately summarised in the chapter. Shrewdness, universality of culture, gentleness and a rationalism consistent with all religions, these are the characteristics of Tiruvalluvar, and are well brought out in this chapter.

நாடு is something more than the land. It includes the inhabitants of the country and its resources.

*

The requisites for a good நாடு are industrious producers, good and learned men to form the intellectual class, and high-minded men of wealth :

தள்ளா விளையுளும் தக்காரும் தாழ்விலாச்
செல்வரும் சேர்வது நாடு.

Labour, knowledge and wealth are the elements that make a prosperous state.

*

A State should be free from too many groups and divisions based upon distinctions of race, religion or caste, from anti-social, destructive elements, and from murderous offences which disturb the king's peace :

பல்குழுவும் பாழ்செய்யும் உட்பகையும் வேந்துஅலைக்கும்
கொல்குறும்பும் இல்லாது நாடு.

Even so long ago as in Tiruvalluvar's time, caste and other group-complexes gave trouble to the orderly administration of the State. The Brahmin commentator explains "பல் குழு" as சாதி பற்றியும் கடவுள் பற்றியும் பலர்க்கு உளதாம் ஒருமை (சங்கேதம்) வசத்தால் மாறுபட்டுக் கூடும் பல கூட்டம்.

*

After enunciating everything that goes to make a happy State, the poet winds up the chapter with the following verse emphasizing the importance of good administration.

A state may have everything mentioned in this chapter, yet if it has not the right kind of ruler, they will all come to nothing :

ஆங்குஅமைவு எய்தியக் கண்ணும் பயம்இன்றே
வேந்துஅமைவு இல்லாத நாடு.

FORTIFICATIONS

Chapter 75

Fortifications are as important for the prince who, confident of his strength, sets out on an aggressive operation, as to the cautious who are satisfied with self-defence :

ஆற்று பவர்க்கும் அரண்பொருள் அஞ்சித்தன
போற்று பவர்க்கும் பொருள்.

*

A good fortress should have a moat with water during all seasons, an esplanade, with hills and dense forests around :

மணிநீரும் மண்ணும் மலையும் மணிநிழல்
காடும் உடையது அரண்.

*

The fortress wall, it has been laid down, should be high, broad, strong, and built so as to be difficult of attack by enemies' machines :

உயர்வுஅகலம் திண்மை அருமைஇந் நான்கின்
அமைவுஅரண் என்றுஉரைக்கும் நூல்.

There is a long list of defence machines to be found in *சிலப்பதிகாரம் அடைக்கலக் காதை*, 207–216.

The length to be defended should be little, but there should be ample space inside, and the fort should in all respects be such as to dishearten the enemy :

சிறுகாப்பின் பேர்இடத்தது ஆகி உறுபகை
ஊக்கம் அழிப்பது அரண்.

*

The fortress should have good natural defences, and plenty of food resources inside, and afford scope for the garrison to attack the enemy from inside without exposing themselves:

கொளற்குஅரிதாய் கொண்டகூழ்த் தாகி அகத்தார்
நிலைக்குஎளிதுஆம் நீரது அரண்.

*

Though good in every respect, a fort is yet not dependable unless it has a good garrison that will rise to the occasion and knows how to fight in its defence:

எல்லாப் பொருளும் உடைத்தாய் இடத்துஉதவும்
நல்லாள் உடையது அரண்.

*

A fort should be built so as to be difficult of being taken by siege, or by storm, or through the betrayal of traitors :

முற்றியும் முற்றாது எறிந்தும் அறைப்படுத்தும்
பற்றற்கு அரியது அரண்.

*

The importance of a good commander is pointed out in the last Kural of the chapter.

All the excellences of the fort comes to nothing if the commander is not a man of ability :

எனைமாட்சித்து ஆகியக் கண்ணும் வினைமாட்சி
இல்லார்கண் இல்லது அரண்.

*

THE EXCHEQUER

Chapter 76

There is nothing so worthy as wealth, which has the quality of giving worth even to worthless men:

பொருள் அல்லவரைப் பொருளாகச் செய்யும்
பொருளல்லது இல்லை பொருள்.

*

Wealth leads to Dharma as well as happiness in this life if it is acquired with discrimination in the right way and without evil:

அறன் ஈனும் இன்பமும் ஈனும் திறன் அறிந்து
தீது இன்றி வந்த பொருள்.

*

Wealth that can be got by discarding compassion (on the part of the acquirer) and without love (on the part of those who part with it) is not to be cared for, but should be spurned:

அருளொடும் அன்பொடும் வாராப் பொருள் ஆக்கம்
புல்லார் புரள விடல்.

அருள் and அன்பு are here used to express respectively, tenderness of feeling proceeding from and towards the acquirer. Applied to the king, this verse condemns cruel exactions.

*

Besides the fraction, often stated as a sixth, that is levied as a tax by the king from out of produce or income, the following belong to the royal coffers: ownerless property such as treasure-trove and escheat, transit duties on imports and on internal traffic, and what is gained in war:

உறுபொருளும் உல்கு பொருளும்தன் ஒன்னார்த்
தெறுபொருளும் வேந்தன் பொருள்.

*

The chief advantage of wealth is the security it gives. A man of wealth may venture on any action, in that splendid security with which a man looks on an elephant-fight from the top of a hill. He enjoys all the pleasures of adventure and of triumph without anxiety as to possible reverses:

குன்றேறி யானைப்போர் கண்டற்றுஆல் தன்கைத்து
உண்டாகச் செய்வான் வினை. [ஒன்று

*

Make wealth for there is no other munition of war so effective. There is no sharper sword with which to cut the pride and confidence of the enemy :

செய்க பொருளைச் செறுநர் செருக்குஅறுக்கும்
எஃகுஅதனின் கூரியது இல்.

THE ARMY

Chapter 77

This and the next chapter deal with the army.

Among all that a state possesses the most important is a good army. It should be well-manned in all its component parts and possess indomitable courage :

உறுப்புஅமைந்து ஊறுஅஞ்சா வெல்படை வேந்தன்
வெறுக்கையுள் எல்லாம் தலை.

*

When outnumbered and pressed hard in battle, regiments that possess an old and good tradition can be trusted to stand undaunted,— not others, so confidently :

உலைவிடத்து ஊறுஅஞ்சா வன்கண் தொலைவிடத்து
தொல்படைக்கு அல்லால் அரிது.

*

Regiments that have done victorious service in past actions and have proved their valour and loyalty are the vital parts of an army :

அழிவுஇன்று அறைபோகா தாகி வழிவந்த
வன்க ணதுவே படை.

அறைபோதல் is to be bought off by the enemy.

*

A regiment is worthy of its name only if it can stand in fighting order in the face of the most deadly assaults :

கூற்றுஉடன்று மேல்வரினும் கூடி எதிர்நிற்கும்
ஆற்ற லதுவே படை.

*

Bravery, military pride, tradition of chivalry and trustworthiness are the four qualities that make a regiment invincible :

மறம்மானம் மாண்ட வழிச்செலவு தேற்றம்
எனநான்கே ஏமம் படைக்கு.

*

The army should know how to receive an attack without breaking up in disorder, and to advance :

தார்தாங்கிச் செல்வது தானை தலைவந்த
போர்தாங்கும் தன்மை அறிந்து.

*

The men may not be bold, nor have much strength of resistance, but right formation often leads an army to success :

அடல்தகையும் ஆற்றலும் இல்லெனினும் தானை
படைத்தகையால் பாடு பெறும்.

*

If the king guards against losing the affection of the army through personal misconduct or by niggardliness in payments towards its upkeep, he keeps it free from desertions, disaffection and the temptations of poverty. It is only then that the army fights well and achieves victories :

சிறுமையும் செல்லாத் துணியும் வறுமையும்
இல்லாயின் வெல்லும் படை.

செல்லாத்துணி is incurable disaffection.

*

Even when the army has plenty of brave and good soldiers, without good commanders it cannot stand :

நிலைமக்கள் சால உடைத்தெனினும் தானை
தலைமக்கள் இல்வழி இல்.

VALOUR

Chapter 78

In beautiful relief against the general didactic style of Kural, here and there we suddenly land on sparkling poetry.

Do not challenge my commander. Many are those who having stood against him stand now in stone.

என்ஐ முன் நில்லன்மின் தெவ்விர் பலர்என் ஐ
முன்நின்று கல்நின்ற வர்.

We see here that the custom of setting up memorials in stone for those killed in battle was prevalent. It seems from the reference that the statue or stone was raised on the field of battle, and the victors did this, perhaps, as much out of pride as an act of chivalry for the opponents who fell in battle.

*

It is better even to miss the aim hurling the javelin at an elephant than to throw it successfully at a hare running in the jungle:

கான முயல்எய்த அம்பினில் யானை
பிழைத்தவேல் ஏந்தல் இனிது.

i.e. It is not worthy of a soldier to attack a weak and helpless foe, so I let you go. This is

supposed to be addressed by the victor when he withdraws from pursuing the enemy.

தழிஞ்சி was the technical term for the military virtue of abstaining from attacking a fallen foe.

It is a soldier's virtue to be pitiless in battle. But when an enemy is in distress, to render him help is the edge of the soldier's sword :

பேராண்மை என்ப தறுகண் ஒன்று உற்றக்கால்

ஊராண்மை மற்று அதன் எஃகு.

i.e., kindness to a foe in distress cuts him to the quick.

*

The hero hurls his javelin at the attacking elephant and looks about for a fresh weapon with which to receive the next elephant. He then realises for the first time that a javelin had pierced him and is sticking in his body without his having known it. Smiling in joy at finding a weapon he plucks it out and arms himself with it :

கைவேல் களிற்றொடு போக்கி வருபவன்

மெய்வேல் பறியா நகும்.

நூழிலாட்டு was a special term for carrying on the fight in spite of grievous wounds.

*

Once the brave soldier's eyes glare in anger at the foe, they do not wink again when the javelin is hurled at him, for such winking would amount to fleeing from the battle :

விழித்தகண் வேல்கொண்டு எறிய அழித்துஇமைப்பின்
ஓட்டுஅன்றோ வன்க ணவர்க்கு.

*

Re-calling his past, the brave soldier would deem those days lost wherein he did not receive grievous wounds in battle :

விழுப்புண் படாதநாள் எல்லாம் வழுக்கினுள்
வைக்கும்தன் நாளை எடுத்து.

*

None may blame the hero for failure when he has dared his life in pursuance of his own challenge. The failure is not a fault, for the readiness to give up life is the fulfilment of the pledge :

இழைத்தது இகவாமை சாவாரை யாரே
பிழைத்தது ஒறுக்கிற் பவர்.

இழைத்தல் is to take an oath to do a deed on pain of dishonour.

•

Of what use is it to die amidst weeping relatives, and of age or sickness? One should eagerly seek a death that is followed by a different kind of tears, tears of grateful admiration in the eyes of the king that one served:

புரந்தார்கண் நீர்மல்கச் சாகில்பின் சாக்காடு
இரந்துகோள் தக்கது உடைத்து.

As against the reiterated emphasis on equanimity and compassion that pervades the whole of Kural, this chapter glorifying military valour is remarkable.

EDUCATION

ON LEARNING

Chapter 40

The first thing laid down in the chapter on learning is the duty of relating one's conduct to one's knowledge. Knowledge thus translated becomes culture.

Acquire a sound knowledge of things that should be learnt, and then act accordingly :

கற்கக் கசடறக் கற்பவை கற்றபின்
நிற்க அதற்குத் தக.

•

Learning is divided into two simple divisions, mathematics and literature,—" numbers " and " letters ". They are like two eyes to human life. An illiterate man's life, whatever his station may be, is no better than that of a man cursed with blindness :

எண்ணென்ப, ஏனை எழுத்தென்ப இவ்விரண்டும்
கண்ணென்ப வாழும் உயிர்க்கு.

வாழும் உயிர்க்கு expresses the universality of the need for literacy.

•

Only the literate can be said to have eyes. The unlettered have but two sore spots in the face, not eyes :

> கண்ணுடையர் என்பவர் கற்றோர் முகத்துஇரண்டு
> புண்ணுடையர் கல்லா தவர்.

*

Learning has to be acquired in fear and humility. The seeker of knowledge must stand before the learned even as a man in want stands before the rich giver, eager and trembling. He who is proud and does not care to undergo this must remain ignorant and is doomed to inferiority in life :

> உடையார்முன் இல்லார்போல் ஏக்கற்றும் கற்றார்
> கடையரே கல்லா தவர்.

*

Study brings knowledge in proportion to the labour bestowed, even as water oozes into the sand-pit in the river-bed in the measure of the digging :

> தொட்டனைத்து ஊறும் மணற்கேணி மாந்தர்க்கு
> கற்றனைத்து ஊறும் அறிவு.

*

The peculiar characteristic of learning is that it is a double source of pleasure, an

intrinsic joy to him who has the knowledge, and a source of happiness to others that benefit by it.

While really the learned man finds in his learning his own pleasure, he sees that others look upon him as a benefactor, conferring pleasure on them. Hence the truly learned are in love with knowledge :

> *தாம் இன்புறுவது உலகு இன்புறக்கண்டு*
> *காமுறுவர் கற்றறிந் தார்.*

ON BEING UNLETTERED

Chapter 41

This is a chapter on being unlettered. The Tamil classics lay a remarkable emphasis on being lettered. It is indeed often considered as important as the moral virtues.

Unlettered men are like alkaline soil. Their existence is worthless and nominal :

உளரென்னும் மாத்திரையர் அல்லால் பயவாக்
களர்அனையர் கல்லா தவர்.

*

Even if an unlettered man displays great good sense, it will not be recognised by the learned :

கல்லாதான் ஒட்பம் கழியநன் றாயினும்
கொள்ளார் அறிவுடை யார்.

This is not a remark against learned men, but is intended to insist on the importance of learning.

*

An unlettered man's conceit will find its end when the occasion for speech arrives :

கல்லா ஒருவன் தகைமை தலைப்பெய்து
சொல்லாடச் சோர்வு படும்.

*

The size and personality of a man who is externally grand but has not an intellect improved by learning is like the grandeur of large clay images made beautiful with cloured paste :

நுண்மாண் நுழைபுலம் இல்லான் எழில்நலம்
மண்மாண் புனைபாவை அற்று.

The office of learning is to make the mind (புலன்) penetrating (நுண்), lofty (மாண்), and rich with information (நுழை).

*

Wealth in the hands of ignorant men, and poverty that afflicts learned men, cause grief to them as well as to the world at large. But between the two misfits, the latter is not so great a misfortune as the former; for, while poverty cannot cause real harm to the soul of the learned, wealth in the hands of ignorance is a danger to the world :

நல்லார்கண் பட்ட வறுமையின் இன்னாதே
கல்லார்கண் பட்ட திரு.

*

The unlettered though born in a higher social class are inferior in status to those who though born low have acquired learning :

> மேற்பிறந்தார் ஆயினும் கல்லாதார் கீழ்ப்பிறந்தும்
> கற்றார் அனைத்திலர் பாடு.

Parimelazhagar's remarks on this verse are interesting : உடம்போடு அழியும் சாதி உயர்ச்சியினும், உயிரோடு செல்லும் கல்வி உயர்ச்சி சிறப்புடையது என்பதாம், *i. e.* the virtue and advantage of birth in a high caste disappear with the body, but that of learning goes with the soul to the next birth. The commentator recognises the advantage of caste until death, while the text does not seem to make this out. Again, Parimelazhagar makes learning an annexe to the soul, like the sum of moral good and evil, and the knowledge that is more appropriately called Enlightenment that attaches itself to the soul in its re-birth. It is obvious that Tiruvalluvar meant simply to lay down the secular truth that learning gives greater honour and status than caste, apart from any reference to the law of Karma.

ON ORAL INSTRUCTION

Chapter 42

Knowledge acquired or confirmed by listening to the teachings and expositions of learned men was a major division of learning in our ancient system, apart from knowledge acquired by study. This is called கேள்வி in Tamil, and the phrase கல்வி கேள்வி expresses the complete accomplishment of a learned man.

*

Listening as a means of learning is prescribed for the illiterate. It will be a staff to lean upon when beset with weakness :

கற்றிலன் ஆயினும் கேட்க அஃதுஒருவற்கு
ஒற்கத்தின் ஊற்றுஆம் துணை.

*

But the teacher should not only be learned but one who leads the right life. Indeed the latter is more important :

இழுக்கல் உடையுழி ஊற்றுக்கோல் அற்றே
ஒழுக்கம் உடையார்வாய்ச் சொல்.

Mere learning is not knowledge. The man of knowledge is one who has learning and guides his life aright.

*

The poet realises the feeling of despair that must sometimes come over men who seek to learn by merely listening, and says, as if for consolation :—

> *எனைத்தானும் நல்லவை கேட்க அனைத்தானும்*
> *ஆன்ற பெருமை தரும்.*

i. e., Be it but little, listen and assimilate. It will produce great good.

*

Study marked by a searching inquiry and much listening to learned men will save one from foolish statements even if labouring under error :

> *பிழைத்துணர்ந்தும் பேதைமை சொல்லார் இழைத்*
> *ஈண்டிய கேள்வி யவர்.* [*துணர்ந்து*

*

Listening to the expositions of learned men gives one the humility of speech that appertains to true learning. Mere study is apt to leave one conceited :

> *நுணங்கிய கேள்வியர் அல்லார் வணங்கிய*
> *வாயினர் ஆதல் அரிது.*

நுணங்கிய கேள்வி is listening to the exposition of difficult and fine points that sharpens the listeners' powers of research. This automatically develops humility.

———

KNOWLEDGE

Chapter 43

Perhaps அறிவு is nearer to Discrimination and Wisdom than to 'knowledge.'

Knowledge is an inner fortification that enemies cannot destroy, and is the ultimate, impregnable defence :

அறிவுஅற்றம் காக்கும் கருவி செறுவார்க்கும்
உள்அழிக்கல் ஆகா அரண்.

*

True knowledge controls thought and conduct and keeps both away from evil, and helps one to move in the right path :

சென்ற இடத்தால் செலவிடாத் தீதுஒரீஇ
நன்றின்பால் உய்ப்பது அறிவு.

*

True knowledge enables one to understand the true import of things and not to be misled by the circumstances in which they appear :

எப்பொருள் யார்யார்வாய்க் கேட்பினும் அப்பொருள்
மெய்ப்பொருள் காண்பது அறிவு.

*

It finds easy and convincing expression for one's own thoughts, and enables one to grasp the essence of what is said by others, be it however complicated:

எண்பொருள வாகச் செலச்சொல்லித் தான்பிறர்வாய்
நுண்பொருள் காண்பது அறிவு.

*

It befriends the world by fostering a spirit of equanimity:

உலகம் தழீஇயது ஒட்பம் மலர்தலும்
கூம்பலும் இல்லது அறிவு.

*

The man of true knowledge understands how the world moves, and moves accordingly:

எவ்வது உறைவது உலகம் உலகத்தோடு
அவ்வது உறைவது அறிவு.

*

Unlike the ignorant, he knows beforehand what will befall, and avoids grief:

அறிவுடையார் ஆவது அறிவார் அறிவிலார்
அஃது அறிகல்லா தவர்.
எதிரதாக் காக்கும் அறிவினார்க்கு இல்லை
அதிர வருவதோர் நோய்.

*

He fears what is truly to be feared, and refrains from it:

*அஞ்சுவது அஞ்சாமை பேதைமை அஞ்சுவது
அஞ்சல் அறிவார் தொழில்.*

*

A discriminating mind is the greatest of possessions. Without it, all wealth will come to nothing :

*அறிவுடையார் எல்லாம் உடையார் அறிவிலார்
என்னுடைய ரேனும் இலர்.*

GOOD MINISTERS

Chapter 45

The king's eyes are his ministers. So he should choose them with circumspection :

சூழ்வார்கண் ணாக ஒழுகலால் மன்னவன்
சூழ்வாரைச் சூழ்ந்து கொளல்.

Who can hurt the prince that commands the loyalty of advisers who do not hesitate to give unpleasant counsel and to point it out to him when he goes wrong? The prince who has not this priceless protection of advisers that have the courage to tell him when he goes wrong will find his ruin even if there be no enemies to attack him :

இடிக்கும் துணையாரை ஆள்வாரை யாரே
கெடுக்கும் தகைமை யவர்.

இடிப்பாரை இல்லாத ஏமரா மன்னன்
கெடுப்பார் இலானும் கெடும்.

ON FRIENDSHIP

Chapter 79

The friendship of men of character is like the young moon which grows as the days pass, but that of fools diminishes with familiarity like the moon after her full phase :

நிறைநீர நீரவர் கேண்மை பிறைமதிப்
பின்னீர பேதையார் நட்பு.

*

Like the beauty of a good book, good men's friendship does not lose its freshness but gives increased pleasure every day :

நவில்தொறும் நூல்நயம் போலும் பயில்தொறும்
பண்புடை யாளர் தொடர்பு.

With deeper study one derives enhanced pleasure from a book.

*

Friendship is not for pleasant laughter, but for harsh advice promptly to be given when one swerves from the right path.

True friendship is that which comes swiftly to the rescue in the hour of trouble, even as the hand goes instinctively to hold the dress, when

it chances to slip down in company. *i. e.* The emotion of love should approximate to the reflex action of the nerves :

> நகுதல் பொருட்டுஅன்று நட்டல் மிகுதிக்கண்
> மேற்சென்று இடித்தற் பொருட்டு.
>
> உடுக்கை இழந்தவன் கைபோல் ஆங்கே
> இடுக்கண் களைவதுஆம் நட்பு.

*

Identity of feelings makes friendship ; it is needless for friends to meet often or be long together :

> புணர்ச்சி பழகுதல் வேண்டா உணர்ச்சிதான்
> நட்புஆம் கிழமை தரும்.

*

The face may wear a smile at the sight of one, but he alone is a friend whose sight brings about an internal joy which bathes the whole soul in a smile :

> முகநக நட்பது நட்பு அன்று நெஞ்சத்து
> அகநக நட்பது நட்பு.

*

The triple service of friendship is to lead out of the wrong path, to take into the right path, and to share in misfortune :

அழிவி னவைநீக்கி ஆறுஉய்த்து அழிவின்கண்
அல்லல் உழப்பதாம் நட்பு.

•

Chapter 80

There is nothing so harmful as friendship contracted without discrimination, because the quality of friendship is that friendship once made cannot be given up :

நாடாது நட்டலின் கேடுஇல்லை நட்டபின்
வீடுஇல்லை நட்புஆள் பவர்க்கு.

*

Let friendship be contracted only after knowing the man's good points, his birth, his defects and his connections (relatives and friends) :

குணனும் குடிமையும் குற்றமும் குன்றா
இனனும் அறிந்துயாக்க நட்பு.

*

It is worth while making sacrifices to acquire the friendship of one who is well-born and who is sensitive to public opinion about him :

குடிப்பிறந்து தன்கண் பழிநாணு வானைக்
கொடுத்தும் கொளல்வேண்டும் நட்பு.

*

Go out in search for those in whom you find the capacity to censure you and if necessary inflict grief without flinching when you go wrong, and of leading you into the good path and make friendship with such men :

> அழச்சொல்லி அல்லது இடித்து வழக்குஅறிய
> வல்லார்நட்பு ஆய்ந்து கொளல்.

*

Misfortune has its use in that it serves as a yard-stick for you to spread out and measure the constancy of friends and relatives :

> கேட்டினும் உண்டுஓர் உறுதி கிளைஞரை
> நீட்டி அளப்பதுஓர் கோல்.

'Spread out', so that the defects if any may be disclosed.

*

Do not entertain thoughts which must lead to the shrinking of enthusiasm. Do not take friends that instead of giving you strength weaken you in difficult situations :

> உள்ளற்க உள்ளம் சிறுகுவ கொள்ளற்க
> அல்லற்கண் ஆற்றறுப்பார் நட்பு.

*

It is a gain by itself if one gets away from the friendship of fools:

ஊதியம் என்பது ஒருவற்குப் பேதையார்
கேண்மை ஒரீஇ விடல்.

*

Chapter 82

Do not take trouble to keep up the friendship of worthless men. It is well to allow it to die out, be it ever so sweet and honey-like :

பருகுவார் போலினும் பண்புஇலார் கேண்மை
பெருகலின் குன்றல் இனிது.

*

What matters it whether we gain or lose the friendship of selfish men who when it is profitable to them befriend us and leave us when it is not ?

உறின்நட்டு அறின்ஒரூஉம் ஒப்புஇலார் கேண்மை
பெறினும் இழப்பினும் என்.

ஒப்பிலார் means men whose conduct is not shaped to further the life of the community, *i. e.*, selfish, the reverse of ஒப்புரவு.

*

The friendship that weighs advantages is of the same class with the affection of courtesans and partnership among thieves :

உறுவது சீர்தூக்கும் நட்பும் பெறுவது
கொள்வாரும் கள்வரும் நேர்.

*

It is better to be unfriended than to have allies that desert you in war. It is better to go on foot than seek to use unbroken horses :

அமரகத்து ஆற்றுஅறுக்கும் கல்லாமா அன்னார்
தமரின் தனிமை தலை.

கல்லாமா, 'uneducated' horse.

The wild horses are nice to look at, but are of no avail and are a danger at the time of trial.

*

The opposition of wise and good men does infinitely greater good than the closest friendship of a fool :

பேதை பெருங்கெழீஇ நட்பின் அறிவுடையார்
ஏதின்மை கோடி உறும்.

*

One gets much more benefit from enemies than from the friendship of mere jolly good fellows and jesters and the like :

நகைவகையர் ஆகிய நட்பின் பகைவரால்
பத்துஅடுத்த கோடி உறும்.

*

Allow your friendship silently to die out with men who fail to help where they could :

ஒல்லும் கருமம் உடற்றுபவர் கேண்மை
சொல்லாடார் சோர விடல்.

*

Do not even in dream associate with those whose words and deeds differ :

கனவிலும் இன்னாது மன்னோ வினைவேறு
சொல்வேறு பட்டார் தொடர்பு.

*

There are some who seek to befriend you at home and in private, but attack your fair name on public occasions. Avoid all advances on the part of such people :

எனைத்தும் குறுகுதல் ஓம்பல் மனைக்கெழீஇ
மன்றில் பழிப்பார் தொடர்பு.

Politics must have been fairly 'advanced' to bring out the need for such advice as in this last verse.

*

Chapter 83

Learning and culture have no effect on hatred. They do not help to remove enmity.

பலநல்ல கற்றக் கடைத்தும் மனம்நல்லர்
ஆகுதல் மாணார்க்கு அரிது.

How true! The mind has a capacity of dividing itself into compartments, so that unreasoned hatred persists along with learning and philosophy.

*

Do not be misled by politeness or courtesy of language on the part of enemies. The enemy bends his words as he bends his bow, which is not for your good!

சொல்வணக்கம் ஒன்னார்கண் கொள்ளற்க வில்வணக்கம்
தீங்கு குறித்தமை யாள்.

*

An enemy's hands clasped in salutation may conceal a weapon. So also are his tears (of pretended grief or sympathy) not to be trusted, *i.e.*, be on your guard and do not be deceived by external signs of friendship:

தொழுதகை உள்ளும் படையொடுங்கும் ஒன்னார்
அழுதகண் ணீரும் அனைத்து.

FOLLY

Chapters 84 & 85

The biggest folly among follies is to cherish a desire for a prohibited object :

பேதைமையுள் எல்லாம் பேதைமை காதன்மை
கையல்ல தன்கண் செயல்.

When your reason or conscience tells you that a thing is unworthy of you, it is folly to waste your mental energy indulging in thoughts about it.

*

There is no bigger fool than the man who has acquired much book learning and preaches the same to others, but who does not govern himself :

ஓதி உணர்ந்தும் பிறர்க்குஉரைத்தும் தான் அடங்கா
பேதையின் பேதையார் இல்.

*

A fool getting hold of wealth is like a lunatic taking intoxicating liquor ; *i.e.*, it was bad enough being a mad man, but liquor is added to make bad worse :

மையல் ஒருவன் களித்துஅற்றால் பேதைதன்
கையொன்று உடைமை பெறின்.

*

The friendship of fools is perhaps the best, for in this case separation brings no grief !

பெரிதுஇனிது பேதையார் கேண்மை பிரிவின்கண்
பீழைதருவது ஒன்று இல்.

Tiruvalluvar often uses this form of enforcing an idea. It is a distinctive style of his. Cf. verses from ch. 108 at p. 243.

*

A fool's entry into an assembly of wise men is like unwashed feet on a clean bed. One fool ruins the character of a whole assembly :

கழாஅக்கால் பள்ளியுள் வைத்தற்றால் சான்றோர்
குழாஅத்து பேதை புகல்.

" Unwashed feet " is euphemism for one who has neglected necessary ablutions.

*

The self-inflicted miseries of ignorance are greater than what can be inflicted by enemies :

அறிவிலார் தாம்தம்மை பீழிக்கும் பீழை
செறுவார்க்கும் செய்தல் அரிது.

*

There is no folly so great as the folly that makes men proud of their own wisdom :

வெண்மை எனப்படுவது யாதுஎனின் ஒண்மை
உடையம்யாம் என்னும் செருக்கு.

*

Pretending knowledge of things not learnt, one loses credit for even what knowledge one really possesses :

கல்லாத மேற்கொண்டு ஒழுகல் கசடுஅற
வல்லதூஉம் ஐயம் தரும்.

Yet, this is the common weakness of learned men, to intrude with their views on matters outside their sphere of sound knowledge.

*

It is folly to imagine that by wrapping oneself in cloth, one has covered one's indecency, when the greater indecency of a bad character is still exposed :

அற்றம் மறைத்தலோ புல்லறிவு தம்வயின்
குற்றம் மறையா வழி.

Bad character is more indecent than any part of the body.

ENMITY

Chapter 88

Even in jest do not entertain the wish to make an enemy of any one :

பகைஎன்னும் பண்புஇலதனை ஒருவன்
நகையேயும் வேண்டற்பாற்று அன்று.

It is ever a bad thing to get into hostile relationship with others.

*

The hostility of soldiers is not so bad as that of men whose weapon is their word :

வில்ஏர் உழவர் பகைகொளினும் கொள்ளற்க
சொல்ஏர் உழவர் பகை.

சொல் ஏர் உழவர், Those who ' plough with the word ', obviously referring to plotters and politicians.

*

It is worse than madness for one who has no allies to make numerous enemies :

ஏமுற்ற வரினும் ஏழை தமியனாய்
பல்லார் பகைகொள் பவன்.

*

If you have no allies, and you are faced with two enemies, immediately make it up with either of them and make of him a fast friend :

தன்துணை இன்றுஆல் பகைஇரண்டுஆல் தான்ஒருவன்
இன்துணையாக் கொள்கஅவற்றின் ஒன்று.

*

When you are down in luck, make neither friends nor enemies ; be neutral even as regards those whom you have found reason to trust or to distrust :

தேறினும் தேறா விடினும் அழிவின்கண்
தேறான் பகாஅன் விடல்.

*

Do not show your weakness to your enemies, nor even seek relief by communicating your difficulties to your friends if they are not aware of them already :

நோவற்க நொந்தது அறியார்க்கு மேவற்க
மென்மை பகைவர் அகத்து.

Statecraft consists in getting support without letting your weakness be known.

*

Procrastination is folly. A thorny shrub should be removed when it is yet young. If

you let it grow and then try to remove it, you will only hurt your hands :

> இளைதாக முள்மரம் கொல்க களையுநர்
> கைகொல்லும் காழ்த்த இடத்து.

•

They will be surely destroyed who fail to take timely action to curb the strength of their enemies :

> உயிர்ப்ப உளர்அல்லர் மன்ற செயிர்ப்பவர்
> செம்மல் சிதைக்கலா தார்.

GUARD AGAINST DECEIVERS

Chapter 89

Protection from the rays of the sun is good. So also is water good. But sometimes even these become harmful and then they are to be avoided. So also are relatives, when they become evil-minded, a danger to be guarded against :

நிழல்நீரும் இன்னாத இன்னா தமர்நீரும்
இன்னாவாம் இன்னா செயின்.

*

There can be no real union in a community when there is hatred concealed in the mind, just as broken copper cannot be welded :

செப்பின் புணர்ச்சிபோல் கூடினும் கூடாதே
உட்பகை உற்ற குடி.

A WARNING

Chapter 91

The wife is generally treated with great consideration in Kural. But this chapter sets down wife-rule as a certain cause of weakness and disgrace for rulers and men of action. Feminists should not be upset by things said in so old a book as Kural. Wife-domineered statesmen hardly command respect or confidence even in modern times. What is condemned in this chapter is the domination of the husband's judgment by the wife, and not love and mutual respect between husband and wife. The first two verses condemn excessive attachment, which curbs the heroism and the spirit of adventure on which depends the success of kings and men of action.

*

Inordinate attachment to one's wife is an impediment to the attainment of spirituality. Even in the world of action, it is to be avoided :

மனைவிழைவார் மாண்பயன் எய்தார் வினைவிழைவார்
வேண்டாப் பொருளும் அது.

*

Again, he who neglects his duties on account of his attachment to his wife will find himself overwhelmed by public scandal :

பேணாது பெண்விழைவான் ஆக்கம் பெரியதோர்
நாணாக நாணுத் தரும்.

Such attachment does not matter in the case of insignificant men, but becomes a scandal in men holding public positions.

*

Those who are governed by their wives are unable to act generously and boldly in respect of large interests, friends and society in general. Domination by one's wife leads to narrowness of outlook and initiative :

நட்டார் குறைமுடியார் நன்றுஆற்றார் நல்நுதலாள்
பெட்டாங்கு ஒழுகு பவர்.

அறவினையும் ஆன்ற பொருளும் பிறவினையும்
பெண்ஏவல் செய்வார்கண் இல்.

This view about the direct or indirect interference of wives in the public affairs managed by their husbands, and the weakening of policy by reason of excessive attachment to one's wife or fear of displeasure at home, is not inconsistent with the dignity and equality of woman's status. Nor has it nothing to do with woman's capacity for public life. No man or woman can serve two masters satisfactorily. One who holds a public responsibility cannot permit himself or herself to be guided by another who has not been entrusted with that responsibility. If the other is a wife, the

danger of a clouded judgment is all the greater. Though on a first reading the chapter may appear to be old-fashioned in outlook, it must be admitted that domination by one's wife even in modern times cannot be deemed satisfactory where the husband holds the responsibility, any more than the converse. Where the wife is by reason of her qualification discharging a public responsibility, domination by one who happens to be her husband would be equally unsatisfactory. If the domination is based on subservience to a better judgment or wider experience or deeper knowledge, the case would be an exception. But where the domination is based on mere uxoriousness the result is obviously bad, and it is this that is condemned in the chapter.

ON WOMEN AND WINE AND GAMBLING

Chapters 92 to 94

These are chapters warning men against association with loose women.

The false embrace of a woman that sells her body for money is like trying to find pleasure in the embrace of the dead body of an unknown person in a dark room :

பொருள்பெண்டிர் பொய்ம்மை முயக்கம் இருட்டுஅறை
ஏதில் பிணம்தழீஇ அற்று. [யில்

*

Spirituous liquor was not a source of public revenue in ancient days. It was open to men to ruin themselves if they liked, but no one else had an interest in the sale of intoxicating liquors,—licensee, monopoly-holder or Government. The evil of indulgence in the artificial happiness obtained from spirituous drinks is in Kural a subject matter for emphatic denunciation.

To show reason to one who has indulged in liquor is like taking a light to search for a man who is drowned in deep water :

களித்தானைக் காரணம் காட்டுதல் கீழ்நீர்
குளித்தானை தீத்துரீஇ அற்று.

The light of reason cannot pierce the darkness of a drunkard's mind. The poison has bereft him of the power of response to reason.

*

Will one in his free moments watch some one else who is drunk and realise the mischief of the potion?

> கள் உண்ணாப்போழ்தில் களித்தானைக் காணுங்கால்
> உள்ளான்கொல் உண்டதன் சோர்வு.

*

Those who drink in secret soon become the laughing-stock of the locality, for the effects of the indulgence cannot for long remain unknown:

> உள்ஒற்றி உள்ளூர் நகப்படுவர் எஞ்ஞான்றும்
> கள்ஒற்றிக் கண்சாய் பவர்.

*

Gambling, even if you win, is a thing to be avoided. The winning is like the fish swallowing the hook:

> வேண்டற்க வென்றிடினும் சூதினை வென்றதூஉம்
> தூண்டில்பொன் மீன்விழுங்கி யற்று.

பொன் is iron. See also 89 (8): அரம்பொருத பொன்போலத் தேயும் உரம்பொருது உட்பகை உற்ற குடி.

*

Even when losing, gambling is sweet and holds the victim in its grip, resembling in this the attachment to life in spite of excruciating physical agony which would end by death. The victim avoids death and holds on to life. The point is more emphatically enforced by reversing the comparison, and saying that attachment to life is like the grip that the game gets on its victim :

இழத்தொறூஉம் காதலிக்கும் சூதேபோல் துன்பம்
உழத்தொறூஉம் காதற்று உயிர்.

ON THE ART OF HEALING

Chapter 95

Make a careful diagnosis, discover the true cause of the disease, think out the proper remedy, and apply it effectively :

நோய்நாடி நோய்முதல் நாடி அதுதணிக்கும்
வாய்நாடி வாய்ப்பச் செயல்.

A very terse and all-covering aphorism for the surgeon as well as the physician.

*

In prescribing the treatment, the good physician takes into consideration the strength of the patient, the progress of the disease and the season :

உற்றான் அளவு பிணிஅளவும் காலமும்
கற்றான் கருதிச் செயல்.

*

Right treatment consists of four elements, the patient, the doctor, the remedy, and the attendant :

உற்றவன் தீர்ப்பான் மருந்துஉழைச் செல்வான்என்று
அப்பால்நாற் கூற்றே மருந்து.

The commentator divides each one of these four elements into four sub-elements making up a sixteenfold classification in order to give a meaning to *அப்பால்* in the second line. Be this as it may, the aphorism makes it clear that the co-operation of the patient and the skilled service of an attendant were considered no less important than the doctor and the drugs.

▪

The following verses recognise restraint in eating as the great secret of good health. Modern science has confirmed the importance of the advice.

If we eat only after making sure that what has been already eaten has been digested, no drugging would be required to keep the body in good health :

மருந்தென வேண்டாவாம் யாக்கைக்கு அருந்தியது
அற்றது போற்றி உணின்.

▪

Make sure that the previous meal has been digested, and wait till you are quite hungry. Then eat what you have found to agree with your health :

அற்றது அறிந்து கடைப்பிடித்து மாறுஅல்ல
துய்க்க துவரப் பசித்து.

மாறல்ல கடைப்பிடித்து : Some good things are not good for all, nor are they good at all times or when eaten in excess. Hence the wise man uses his own personal experience and judges what is suitable, and rejects what does not agree with him.

துவரப்பசித்து indicates that the mere craving to eat something is not enough to show that the stomach is ready, but one should wait for a good sharp hunger.

*

Even then, the food should be taken in right measure. Moderation in eating is the secret of longevity:

அற்றால் அளவுஅறிந்து உண்க அஃதுஉடம்பு
பெற்றான் நெடிதுஉய்க்கும் ஆறு.

*

The man who stops just a little before he feels he has had enough, retains the joy of eating; on the other hand, the big eater invites disease:

இழிவுஅறிந்து உண்பான்கண் இன்பம்போல் நிற்கும்
கழிபேர் இரையான்கண் நோய்.

*

Much pain is saved if one learns to eat only what has been found to suit one's health and to

say 'No'; *i.e.*, exercises self-restraint in respect of quantity:

மாறுபாடு இல்லாத உண்டி மறுத்துஉண்ணின்
ஊறுபாடு இல்லை உயிர்க்கு.

*

The ignorant man who eats beyond "the measure of the fire," *i.e.*, beyond his power of digestion, must be prepared for all sorts of ailments:

தீயளவு அன்றித் தெரியான் பெரிதுஉண்ணின்
நோய்அளவு இன்றிப் படும்.

*

The three humours postulated by those learned in the science of the human body cause disease if there is superfluity or deficiency, *i.e.*, excess or deficiency in food or work upsets the balance and produces disease:

மிகினும் குறையினும் நோய்செய்யும் நூலோர்
வளிமுதலா எண்ணிய மூன்று.

———

GOOD BIRTH

Chapter 96

To be born in a good family is a distinct advantage. Consistency in thought, word and deed and a quick reaction against anything mean or improper are natural to persons well-born :

இல்பிறந்தார் கண் அல்லது இல்லை இயல்பாக
செப்பமும் நாணும் ஒருங்கு.

A kind of instinctive resistance keeps them from slipping out of truth and right conduct.

*

Old families though poor and unable to be munificent maintain their standard of right conduct :

வழங்குவது உள்வீழ்ந்தக் கண்ணும் பழங்குடி
பண்பில் தலைப்பிரிதல் இன்று.

*

They have something to lose though possessed of no wealth, *viz.*, the credit of their families, which keeps them from deceit and impropriety :

சலம்பற்றிச் சால்புஇல செய்யார் மாசற்ற
குலம்பற்றி வாழ்தும் என்பார்.

*

Any fault of theirs, however small, is observed by the world and shows out clear even like the spots in the moon :

குடிப்பிறந்தார் கண்விளங்கும் குற்றம் விசும்பின்
மதிக்கண் மறுப்போல் உயர்ந்து.

*

The sprouts indicate the nature of the soil. So does softness of speech indicate a good family :

நிலத்தின் கிடந்தமை கால்காட்டும் காட்டும்
குலத்தில் பிறந்தார்வாய்ச் சொல்.

Harshness raises doubts as to good birth :

நலத்தின்கண் நார்இன்மை தோன்றின் அவனைக்
குலத்தின்கண் ஐயப் படும்.

*

An instinctive aversion to evil is the secret of a happy and virtuous life. Courteous behaviour is the essential characteristic of good birth :

நலம்வேண்டின் நாண்உடைமை வேண்டும் குலம்
வேண்டுக யார்க்கும் பணிவு. [வேண்டின்

*

குலம் வேண்டின் = If you desire the advantage of good birth, which means, if you desire not to lose it. யார்க்கும் பணிவு brings out the need of the spirit of true humility, which is the essence of courteous conduct, towards not only those placed above, but equals and those below. A proper humility is the best adornment of aristocracy of any kind. நலம் is 'good', in both the moral and the Shylockian sense of 'good', நாணம் is a sensitive conscience whereby the repugnance to evil is made part of the physical organism and the reaction is quick and unconscious. See Ch. 102 below.

SELF-RESPECT

Chapter 97

When you have wealth, cultivate humility; when your means are straitened, then it is you should hold your head high:

> பெருக்கத்து வேண்டும் பணிதல் சிறிய
> சுருக்கத்து வேண்டும் உயர்வு.

i. e., when your means are straitened you should so conduct yourself that your true nobility and pride of high endeavour may be felt by others unaffected by poverty.

*

The hair on the head is a thing of beauty. Removed from its place, it becomes filth. The same is the fate of men who descend from their own level of honourable conduct and demean themselves:

> தலையின் இழிந்த மயிரனையர் மாந்தர்
> நிலையின் இழிந்தக் கடை.

Many verses in the Kural are devoted to describe the wretchedness of a life of dependence on the wealthy with the consequent loss of self-respect. Death by starvation is preferable to the maintenance of comfort and respectability

by dependence on those who look down upon you and do not take you as one of themselves but only render help as to one inferior :

ஒட்டார்பின் சென்றுஒருவன் வாழ்தலின் அந்நிலையே
கெட்டான் எனப்படுதல் நன்று.

*

The world will admire and worship the glory of men who give up life when overtaken by dishonour :

இளிவரின் வாழாத மானம் உடையார்
ஒளிதொழுது எத்தும் உலகு.

GLORY

Chapter 98

Glory consists in wealth of spirit. Devoid of it life is inglorious :

ஒளிஒருவற்கு உள்ள வெறுக்கை இளிஒருவற்கு
அஃதிறந்து வாழ்தும் எனல்.

*

Equal are all in birth, distinction is achieved only by deeds requiring greatness :

பிறப்பொக்கும் எல்லா உயிர்க்கும் சிறப்புஒவ்வா
செய்தொழில் வேற்றுமை யான்.

*

As a virgin guards her purity, must men guard their greatness :

ஒருமை மகளிரே போலப் பெருமையும்
தன்னைத்தான் கொண்டொழுகின் உண்டு.

*

The high-minded man hides the faults of others from view ; but the little busy themselves only about the faults of others :

அற்றம் மறைக்கும் பெருமை சிறுமைதான்
குற்றமே கூறி விடும்.

———

NOBILITY

Chapters 99 & 100

As non-killing is the most important element in the ascetic's duties, abstention from speaking about others' faults is the most important social virtue of men who are carrying on worldly affairs :

கொல்லா நலத்தது நோன்மை பிறர்தீமை
சொல்லா நலத்தது சால்பு.

சால்பு is natural and all-round goodness of character and conduct.

*

Men are successful by reason of humility. It is the weapon which enables a man of character to conquer his opponent :

ஆற்றுவார் ஆற்றல் பணிதல் அதுசான்றோர்
மாற்றாரை மாற்றும் படை.

*

The touchstone of nobility is to take defeat at the hands of lesser men :

சால்பிற்குக் கட்டளை யாதெனில் தோல்வி
துலைஅல்லார் கண்ணும் கொளல்.

*

To those who cannot laugh, this big world is all darkness even during the day :

நகல்வல்லர் அல்லார்க்கு மாஇரு ஞாலம்
பகலும்பால் பட்டன்று இருள்.

Laughter is the light that lightens the world.

•

Their keen intellect may be like a steel file but men without character are verily no men but just trees :

அரம்போலும் கூர்மைய ரேனும் மரம்போல்வர்
மக்கள்பண்பு இல்லா தவர்.

———

NIGGARDLINESS

Chapter 101

When wealth is neither enjoyed by oneself nor given to deserving persons, the possessor becomes a disease to society :

ஏதம் பெரும்செல்வம் தான்துவ்வான் தக்கார்க்குஒன்று
ஈதல் இயல்புஇலா தான்.

Disease, because, instead of being healthy units, such men block circulation.

*

Wealth which is not utilised for helping the distressed is like a good and beautiful maiden forced to remain unmarried until overtaken by old age :

அற்றார்க்குஒன்று ஆற்றாதான் செல்வம் மிகநலம்
பெற்றாள் தமியள்மூத் தற்று.

REPUGNANCE TO EVIL

Chapter 102

The quick and instinctive shrinking from wrong and improper actions is நாணம். This is one of the essential elements of a good character.

Bashfulness is a characteristic of good women. But the repugnance in respect of wrong-doing is the true shame that all should have :

> கருமத்தால் நாணுதல் நாணுத் திருநுதல்
> நல்லவர் நாணுப் பிற.

*

Eating, covering oneself against the weather and the rest are common to all, but the distinction of good men is the spontaneous repugnance to impropriety :

> ஊண்உடை எச்சம் உயிர்க்குஎல்லாம் வேறுஅல்ல
> நாண்உடைமை மாந்தர் சிறப்பு.

Note how sex is inclusively and delicately indicated as ' the rest ' without coarse and direct mention.

*

Even as life finds its abode in the body and separation from it means death, so his honour inseparably lodged in a sensitive conscience, without which it cannot but die :

ஊனைக் குறித்த உயிரெல்லாம் நாணென்னும்
நன்மை குறித்தது சால்பு.

This is a pregnant comparison. The well-developed and sensitive conscience of a good man has a strong attraction to the right in thought, word and deed, even as living things have an instinctive and strong urge to preserve life. The pangs of death should be felt when anything dishonourable is done.

*

A sensitive conscience is a jewel that sets off the virtues of good men. Without it pride becomes intolerable like a disease of the flesh :

அணிஅன்றோ நாண்உடைமை சான்றோர்க்கு அஃது
பிணிஅன்றோ பீடு நடை. [இன்றேல்

*

Honour's true home is the conscience of the man who shrinks from causing dishonour to others even as he does from soiling his own reputation :

பிறர்பழியும் தம்பழியும் நாணுவார் நாணுக்கு
உறைபதி என்னும் உலகு.

*

Men of honour would give up life for honour's sake, but never abandon honour even to save life :

நாணால் உயிரைத் துறப்பார் உயிர்ப்பொருட்டால்
நாண்துறவார் நாண்ஆள் பவர்.

*

Breaking the rules of religion, you lose your caste ; but if you act against the dictates of honour, you are lost to virtue itself :

குலம்சுடும் கொள்கை பிழைப்பின் நலம்சுடும்
நாண்இன்மை நின்றக் கடை.

*

The movements of a man who has not a sensitive conscience are like the simulation of life by marionettes moved by strings :

நாண்அகத்து இல்லார் இயக்கம் மரப்பாவை
நாணால் உயிர்மருட்டி யற்று.

i.e., there is no inner urge for his doings. His movements are governed by external forces.

ON CITIZENSHIP

Chapter 103

குடிசெயல் வகை is how to be a good citizen. குடி is that social unit in which the members have the consciousness of direct participation in interest. It is not to be interpreted as family or clan. The nearest English word is perhaps Community.

*

There is nothing that so dignifies the individual as being ever ready to render service to the community :

கருமம் செயஒருவன் கைதூவேன் என்னும்
பெருமையின் பீடுஉடையது இல்.

*

A community prospers if its members are active, industrious and possess sound knowledge:

ஆள்வினையும் ஆன்ற அறிவும் என இரண்டின்
நீள்வினையால் நீளும் குடி.

*

If you resolve to place yourself at the service of your community, fate will hasten to your help, like a servant with girded loins :

குடிசெய்வல் என்னும் ஒருவற்குத் தெய்வம்
மடிதற்றுத் தான் முந்துறும்.

*

Resolve to labour whole-heartedly for the honour of your nation and you will find your work bear fruit in a manner not imagined by you :

சூழாமல் தானே முடிவுஎய்தும் தம்குடியைத்
தாழாது உஞற்று பவர்க்கு.

i.e., sooner and in greater measure than expected.

*

The world will befriend and gather round him who lives a blameless life of service to his people :

குற்றம் இலனாய்க் குடிசெய்து வாழ்வானை
சுற்றமாச் சுற்றும் உலகு.

*

True valour consists in taking up the responsibilities of the community in which one is born :

நல்ஆண்மை என்பது ஒருவற்குத் தான்பிறந்த
இல்ஆண்மை ஆக்கிக் கொளல்.

*

It is the men of valour that have to bear the responsibility of the many, not only in the battle-field, but in peace also wherein the braver

and more capable members take upon themselves the burden of working for the community:

> அமர்அகத்து வன்கண்ணர் போலத் தமர்அகத்தும்
> ஆற்றுவார் மேற்றே பொறை.

*

He who is bent on service to the community does not waste energy in thinking over convenience of time or points of dignity:

> குடிசெய்வார்க்கு இல்லைப் பருவம் மடிசெய்து
> மானம் கருதக் கெடும்.

*

The man who makes up his mind to reform his community must be prepared for unmitigated suffering and give up his whole earthly existence to it. He must look upon his body as a receptacle to hold griefs and sufferings for the benefit of others:

> இடும்பைக்கே கொள்கலம் கொல்லோ குடும்பத்தை
> குற்றம் மறைப்பான் உடம்பு.

All reform is built on the consecrated suffering of reformers. Sorrow is the only immediate reward of public service, or rather suffering is the way of service. It is remarkable that

this was felt and laid down as the law even so long ago as when Kural was written.

*

That community will fall uprooted by misfortune which has no good citizens to support it by public-spirited sacrifice :

இடுக்கண்கால் கொன்றிட வீழும் அடுத்தூன்றும்
நல்ஆள் இல்லாத குடி.

ON AGRICULTURE

Chapter 104

Many other industries may be taken up, but ultimately the world depends on agriculture. So, despite its troubles, it is the best occupation :

> சுழன்றும்ஏர்ப் பின்னது உலகம் அதனால்
> உழந்தும் உழவே தலை.

*

The tiller of the soil is the axle-pin of the revolving world. On him depends the sustenance of life for those that, unable to take up the plough, follow other occupations :

> உழுவார் உலகத்தார்க்கு ஆணிஅஃது ஆற்றாது
> எழுவாரை எல்லாம் பொறுத்து.

*

They only live by right that till the soil and raise their food. The rest are parasites and sycophants :

> உழுதுஉண்டு வாழ்வாரே வாழ்வார்மற் றெல்லாம்
> தொழுதுஉண்டு பின்செல் பவர்.

*

The State that has fields waving with full-eared corn will see the sovereignty of many

princes resting under the shade of its munificence :

பலகுடை நீழலும் தம்குடைக்கீழ்க் காண்பர்
அலகுஉடை நீழ லவர்.

States that look after their agriculture will enjoy pre-eminent influence in the family of nations.

*

If the tillers of the soil withdraw their labour, even the serenity, equanimity and concentration of spirit of those who have renounced the world will cease to be :

உழவினார் கைம்மடங்கின் இல்லை விழைவதூஉம்
விட்டேமென் பார்க்கு நிலை.

*

Here follow some precepts for the peasant.

If the ploughed soil is left to dry to a fourth of its bulk, there will be a plenteous crop without even a handful of manure being put in :

தொடிப்புழுதி கஃசா உணக்கின் பிடித்துஎருவும்
வேண்டாது சாலப் படும்.

Adequate aeration of the soil is necessary for raising a good crop. தொடி and கஃசா are measures of weight related as 4 to 1.

*

More important than ploughing is manuring. Then, after weeding the field, more important than even watering is the guarding of the crop :

> ஏரினும் நன்று ஆல்எருஇடுதல் கட்டபின்
> நீரினும் நன்றுஅதன் காப்பு.

The comparative is of course to insist on what otherwise may be neglected as merely supplementary and unessential. The obviously essential can afford to be left unemphasized.

*

If the good man fails to bestow personal attention on his field, then like a neglected wife it turns its face away in loving anger :

> செல்லான் கிழவன் இருப்பின் நிலம்புலந்து
> இல்லாளின் ஊடி விடும்.

செல்லான் denotes the need of daily personal attention ; இருப்பின் denotes the need for unceasing activity ; கிழவன் denotes that the duties of attention and affection cannot be delegated. Look after your field as after a wife. You cannot delegate your work to others and you must be ever active to earn the response of love. ஊடல் is the reaction of anger to any real or supposed lapse of attention on the part of the lover or husband. The peasant's field too, like the wife or sweetheart, will forgive and forget as soon as affection and attention are shown again.

The good-wife Earth laughs at the foolishness of men who sit idle, bemoaning their poverty :

இலமென்று அசைஇ இருப்பாரைக் காணின்
நிலமென்னும் நல்லாள் நகும்.

i.e., when there is land to cultivate which will yield in the measure of your labour, it is foolish to bewail your destiny and remain idle and poor.

ON POVERTY

Chapters 105 & 106

Poverty is vividly described in this verse.

Every morning opens with the blighting thought of the struggle for existence that must again be faced :

இன்றும் வருவது கொல்லோ நெருநலும்
கொன்றது போலும் நிரப்பு.

i.e., I managed to survive yesterday. Has another day begun and must I go through it again ? These are the words of the unfortunate man to whom the new day means going again through the dreaded trials of yesterday. *நிரப்பு*, extreme poverty.

*

Even truth gets depreciated in value by reason of indigence. The exposition of truth coming from the mouth of the needy man carries no weight and proves ineffective :

நற்பொருள் நன்குஉணர்ந்து சொல்லினும் நல்கூர்ந்தார்
சொற்சொருள் சோர்வு படும்.

*

A mother's love is the one thing that can be expected to stand unaffected by the exigen-

cies of fortune. Even this is likely to grow lukewarm when the son is a poor man :

அறம்சாரா நல்குரவு ஈன்றதா யானும்
பிறன்போல நோக்கப் படும்.

அறம்சாரா நல்குரவு, indigence not associated with religious duty, or indigence which generally renders even the performance of man's essential duties impossible.

*

If there were no poor people to seek help, this beautiful world would be only like a temporary stage for a marionette show :

இரப்பாரை இல்லாயின் ஈரம்கண் மா ஞாலம்
மரப்பாவை சென்றுவந்து அற்று.

i.e. Life would be mere physical motion without any stirring of the soul within.

*

If the man approached has an open heart and knows his debt to society, then, indeed, to be obliged becomes a beauty and a pleasure in itself :

கரப்புஇலா நெஞ்சின் கடன்அறிவார் முன்நின்று
இரப்புமோர் ஏஎர் உடைத்து.

LABOUR

Chapter 107

This chapter is a vigorous plea for labour and independence.

If the world were so ordained that some of its inhabitants must live in dependence and on the mercy of others, the Creator should indeed deserve the curse of becoming a wandering beggar himself:

இரந்தும் உயிர்வாழ்தல் வேண்டின் பரந்து
கெடுக உலகுஇயற்றி யான்.

*

There is no dish so sweet as that earned by one's own labour, be it but the thinnest gruel:

தெள்நீர் அடுபுற்கை ஆயினும் தாள்தந்தது
உண்ணலின் ஊங்குஇனியது இல்.

*

The 'No' of the unwilling man is death to the suppliant. But it is strange that such mortal poison did not hurt the man from whom it issued and with whom it was in primary, physical contact:

கரப்பவர்க்கு யாங்குஒளிக்கும் கொல்லோ இரப்பவர்
சொல்லாடப் போஒம் உயிர்.

UNSCRUPULOUSNESS

Chapter 108

Strange indeed is the complete physical resemblance of the unscrupulous to the human species. It is the best example of nemesis we know of :

மக்களே போல்வர் கயவர் கவரன்ன
ஒப்பாரி யாம்கண்டது இல்.

•

Blessed indeed are the unscrupulous, for they do not suffer from the anxieties and troubles of those who have scruples :

நன்றுஅறி வாரின் கயவர் திருஉடையார்
நெஞ்சத்து அவலம் இலர்.

•

The unscrupulous resemble the gods, for, like these, they do what they please and are bound by no restraints of conduct :

தேவர் அனையர் கயவர் அவரும்தாம்
மேவன செய்து ஒழுகலான்.

*

Fear of punishment is the only code for unscrupulous men. They observe restraints only under the pressure of fear. Sometimes a little good may be got out of them by operating on their greed :

அச்சமே கீழ்களது ஆசாரம் எச்சல்
அவர்உண்டேல் உண்டாம் சிறிது.

*

Good men serve at the mere call of service. But the worthless serve only when crushed, like the sugar-cane :

சொல்லப் பயன்படுவர் சான்றோர் கரும்புபோல்
கொல்லப் பயன்படும் கீழ்.

*

What is the use of unscrupulous men in this world ? When occasion arises they hasten to sell themselves :

எற்றிற்கு உரியர் கயவர்ஒன்று உற்றக்கால்
விற்றற்கு உரியர் விரைந்து.

CONCORDANCE

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